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ABSTRACT

This updated guide has been designed to offer practical advice to teachers as they take a closer look at learning in Scottish primary schools and the lower stages of secondary schools where the teachers are implementing a curriculum based on the 5-14 Guidelines. The guide describes three main sources of assessment information: information from day-to-day activities carried out by teachers as part of teaching; information from special tasks and tests used by teachers for specific purposes; and information obtained from taking a closer look at what pupils are learning, and the ways in which they are learning, to identify appropriate next steps. The first part of the guide introduces key ideas in diagnostic assessment. Parts 2 and 3 of the guide concern Reading and Writing. Chapter 2 (Taking a Closer Look at Learning to Read) looks at the teaching and assessment of reading in terms of the purpose for which that reading is undertaken. Chapter 3 (Diagnostic Procedures in Reading) considers what is involved in taking a closer look at pupils' reading. Chapter 4 (Promoting Success in Reading) suggests ways in which diagnostic procedures may be put into practice. Chapter 5 (Areas for Exploration) presents strategies which teachers can use to promote successful reading. Chapter 6 (Examples of Diagnostic Procedures) provides examples of the use of diagnostic procedures by teachers in a variety of aspects of classroom teaching. Chapter 7 (Taking a Closer Look at Learning to Write) highlights the ideas which underline the teaching and assessment of writing. Chapter 8 (Diagnostic Procedures in Writing) is concerned with what is involved in taking a closer look at pupils' writing and suggests ways in which evidence can be gathered and acted upon. Chapter 9 (Areas for Exploration) presents strategies which teachers can use to promote successful writing. (NKA)

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The Scottish Council for Research in Education

Education 5–14

**English Language**

Diagnostic Procedures

# *Taking a Closer Look at Reading and Writing*

SCRE

The Scottish Council for Research in Education

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***The 'Taking a Closer Look'* series**

The series consists of sets of publications for English language, maths, and science

**Introductory booklet.**

- *Key Ideas in Diagnostic Assessment. An Introduction to the Taking a Closer Look Series.*

**English Language.** Previously a pack (published 1995) now a single volume containing –

- *Taking a Closer Look at Reading*: Teacher's guide.
- *Taking a Closer Look at Writing*: Teacher's guide.
- The introductory booklet *Key Ideas*

**Mathematics.**

*Set 1:* A package containing –

- *Taking a Closer Look at Shape, Position and Movement/Problem Solving: Space, Fact and Fiction* (1993). Pupil worksheets and teacher's notes and teacher's guide.
- The introductory booklet *Key Ideas.*

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- *Taking a Closer Look at Science* (1995). Teacher's guide.
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*Diagnostic Procedures Project Advisory Committee*
Roger Williams, Lothian Region (Chair of Advisory Committee)
Harry Black, The Scottish Council for Research in Education
Marion Devine, The Scottish Council for Research in Education
Michael Gibson, HMI Scottish Office Education Department
John Hall, The Scottish Council for Research in Education
Wynne Harlen, The Scottish Council for Research in Education
Louise Hayward, St Andrew's College of Education
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Sue Mingard, The Scottish Council for Research in Education
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# 1 Taking a Closer Look

Assessment can take many forms and fulfil many purposes. This chapter is about some of those forms of assessment but it is focused on one purpose: to help teachers to teach and pupils to learn. The context is the classrooms of Scottish primary schools and the lower stages of secondary schools where the teachers are implementing a curriculum based on the 5–14 guidelines.

The national guidelines on Assessment 5–14 and, in particular, the staff development pack *From Guidelines to Policy and Practice*, set assessment firmly in the context of learning and teaching.

## THE PRINCIPLES

A number of clear principles are established for effective learning, teaching and assessment:

- teachers should be clear about learning aims for individuals, groups and classes, taking into account what has gone before
- teachers should build upon pupils' current strengths and weaknesses
- teachers should share their aims with pupils and, when possible, parents
- assessment should be carefully managed
- assessment should be based on carefully chosen evidence
- information from assessment should be shared with the pupils to help determine the next steps
- next steps identified for all pupils should be both challenging and attainable
- teachers are recognised as the single most important influence in ensuring quality.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

*Assessment 5–14* describes three main sources of assessment information:

- information from day-to-day activities carried out by teachers as part of everyday teaching
- information from special tasks and tests used by teachers for specific purposes, for example to find out what pupils know before beginning a topic, or at the end of a topic to identify what has been learned
- information obtained from taking a closer look at what pupils are learning, and the ways in which they are learning, in order to identify appropriate next steps.

## THE 'TAKING A CLOSER LOOK' SERIES

This series of resources has been designed to offer practical advice to teachers as they take a closer look at learning in a number of areas across the 5–14 curriculum. Taking a closer look at pupils' learning can be a complicated business. It demands time: time to observe, to talk with pupils and, most importantly, to listen to what they say. Identifying what pupils' ideas are (for example what they think they are being asked to do, how they approach the activities, what leads them to a particular response) is the most important factor in determining suitable next steps.

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However, learning and assessment are complex activities and it will not be possible to assess every pupil on every occasion. Assessment has to be manageable.

This chapter:

- sets 'taking a closer look' in the context of assessment 5–14
- offers advice on when to take a closer look
- defines diagnostic procedures
- identifies strategies teachers might use to gather the evidence they need
- identifies a range of factors which might be considered in promoting successful learning.

The chapter also explains the background to the practical resource which has been produced by the research team and a group of teachers working in partnership in classrooms. This material explores some of the ways in which teachers might identify pupils' particular learning needs, suggest areas for exploration and offer possible next steps to take pupils forward.

## *WHEN TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK*

There are three basic reasons why teachers may want to take a closer look at the progress pupils are making:

- the teacher decides as part of his or her teaching plan to take stock of the needs of individuals or groups or the whole class
- something persuades the teacher that the need has arisen to look more closely at the requirements of individuals or groups or the whole class
- a pupil or a group of pupils asks the teacher for advice on the best way forward.

### *Looking more closely as part of the teaching plan*

- At the beginning of a new topic of work, teachers may want to know the range of understanding pupils already have in order to decide whether to pitch their teaching at the whole class or to differentiate their teaching by groups.
- When they have given their pupils the opportunity to learn a set of ideas or skills, teachers might choose to do a quick check on progress to identify the particular needs of individual pupils or groups.
- When teachers are dealing with frequently occurring basic concepts or skills (such as 'investigating' in science, 'finding information' in language or 'problem solving' in mathematics) teachers might make it their policy to talk in depth for fifteen minutes or so to different small groups of pupils throughout the term to find out how their thinking is progressing.

### *Looking more closely because a need has arisen*

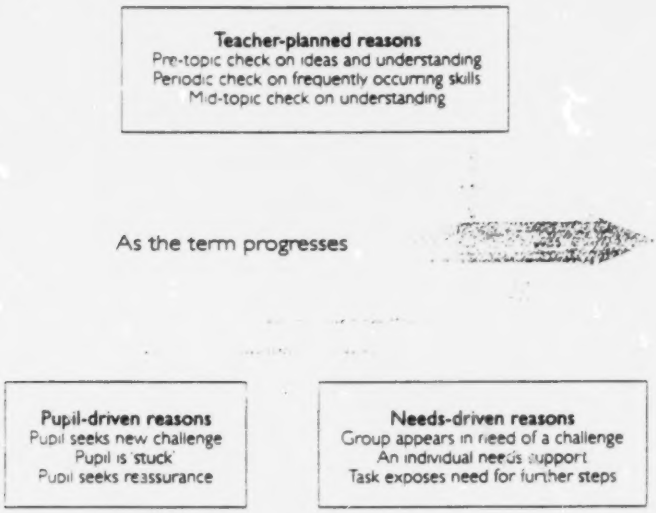
- In the course of teaching, teachers may feel that an individual, a group or indeed the whole class is having difficulty and choose to find out why.
- Following a 'progress check', for example, using national test items, teachers may feel that some targets are causing more problems than others and may decide to look in greater depth at how their pupils are coping with these difficult areas.
- An individual pupil or group of pupils may appear to have mastered a topic and the teacher wishes to confirm this and judge the next most appropriate challenge.

*Looking more closely at the pupil's request*

- A pupil may have coped perfectly well with the learning task set for him or her and now wants a new challenge.
- A pupil may not be sure whether he or she has understood and wants the teacher's opinion, and if necessary, help.
- A pupil may quite simply be 'stuck'!

Figure 1 illustrates these various reasons for taking a closer look. The diagram is not meant to imply that teachers have to engage in formal assessment all the time but it does indicate the continuing nature of good assessment.

*Figure 1: Some reasons for taking a closer look*


Teacher-planned reasons
Pre-topic check on ideas and understanding
Periodic check on frequently occurring skills
Mid-topic check on understanding
As the term progresses
Pupil-driven reasons
Pupil seeks new challenge
Pupil is 'stuck'
Pupil seeks reassurance
Needs-driven reasons
Group appears in need of a challenge
An individual needs support
Task exposes need for further steps

Diagnostic assessment is simply a systematic approach to good teaching. It is systematic because it has a precise focus on particular important attainment targets which the teacher has for his or her pupils. In the 5–14 context, these can be from the various subject guidelines or they can be additional skills or competences which the teacher considers important for his or her class. It is also more systematic than normal practice because, in conducting the assessment, the teacher must make a conscious decision about how evidence will be gathered in relation to the target and he or she must have a clear intention of using this information to take learning forward. But in trying to find out about pupils' progress through looking more closely at how they are learning, teachers are being asked to apply their most sophisticated professional skills – without these skills diagnostic assessment would not be possible.

## DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES

We have defined a diagnostic procedure as a systematic strategy for taking a closer look, a strategy which teachers might use to explore pupils' progress and to help pupils' learning. It comprises:

- a decision to take a closer look at progress
- a decision on how to gather evidence
- an appraisal of the evidence
- an exploration with the pupils of how best to move forward.

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At the heart of the diagnostic procedure is the teacher – observing, talking with and listening to pupils. Effective implementation of diagnostic procedures depends on the professionalism of teachers.

## STRATEGIES FOR GATHERING EVIDENCE

There are many ways in which a teacher can take a closer look at pupils' progress but they can be grouped into three broad categories:

- looking more closely at the evidence from classwork
- asking questions of individuals or groups
- setting carefully designed assessment tasks or assignments.

Each of these methods has advantages and disadvantages and a summary of these, together with examples of strategies which fall within each category, is shown below. Good teaching is likely to include a balance of all three methods.

*Figure 2: Ways of collecting evidence*

| *Strategy* | *Example* | *Advantages* | *Disadvantages* |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Classwork** | Looking more closely at jotter work or projects | Avoids the need for separate 'testing' | Analysing written work can be time-consuming |
| | Observing groups at work | No additional preparation is required from the teacher | Classwork involves a lot of assessment 'noise' which makes it difficult to be clear about individual pupils' attainment |
| | | Easy to focus on particular individuals or groups | Observation relies on the evidence being available when the teacher is at hand |
| **Oral questioning of groups or individuals** | Planning the systematic assessment of a basic skill with different groups over a term | Yields the richest insights into pupils' thinking | Can be time-consuming |
| | Moving around groups to ask questions about specific learning aims | Combines a check on progress and diagnosis of learning needs in one operation | In group discussions it can be difficult to identify the needs of individuals |
| | | | Good questioning can be more difficult than it might appear |
| **Special assessment tasks or assignments** | Discrete exercises built into lessons for assessment purposes | If well-designed, give an uncluttered check on progress | Is only the first stage of the process — further questioning is needed to explore any problems |
| | 'Off the peg' diagnostic tests and instruments | An economic way of checking on large numbers of pupils or several aims at once | Good quality assessment instruments can be time-consuming to prepare |
| | | Some pupils may be motivated to learn in order to perform well on the task | Some pupils may not show their true understanding or skills because of misinterpreting the task |

### *Classwork*

Classwork is a rich source of diagnostic information. Observing pupils at work, asking them questions about what they are doing and making suggestions about how to proceed is central to good teaching. However, this approach can be unsystematic. It is also impracticable for the teacher to get round the whole class for every important aim in this way. However, if the diagnostic strategy is focused on individuals or groups, evidence gathered in this way can be very useful.

Classwork can also be used when taking a closer look at the whole class. Looking for common problems in pupils' completed projects can indicate the teaching points to be covered the next time a similar project is set. Looking at folio work can help the teacher decide on the most appropriate aims for individuals and groups. Scanning pupils' work for evidence about a few specific targets rather than 'general progress' can help to differentiate between pupils who ought to be given more challenging work and those who would benefit from additional support. If there is a disadvantage in this approach it is that there can be a lot of assessment 'noise' to eliminate. Amongst the reasons for this can be that the exercise was not particularly focused on those aims which the teacher wanted to assess or that the work in the project or exercise was the product of collaboration with other pupils in the group.

### *Oral questioning*

Sensitive questioning is at the heart of all diagnostic procedures. Often it is only by talking to pupils that the true nature of their understanding will be revealed. It is also possible to use systematic questioning as the diagnostic check in the first place.

When the focus of assessment is individual pupils or groups this is not too difficult – the main challenge is to ask questions which will help pupils to articulate their understanding. However, where the strategy is to check pupils' progress on one or more aims across the whole class, time can be a considerable constraint. Where frequently-occurring skills are the focus, one solution is to tackle the assessment of a small number of pupils at a time. The science resource in this series provides an extended example of this.

### *Special assessment tasks or assignments*

These are often the most economic way of checking the progress of large numbers of pupils or looking at several targets at once. They can help to categorise pupils into those who need more help and those who have attained the target. However, they are seldom in themselves sufficiently sensitive to pick out why pupils are having difficulties. The teacher must still be prepared to take an even closer look at those pupils who are identified by the check as needing help. But at least by that time, unless the whole class is struggling, the number of pupils who need such detailed attention should be much reduced. If it is not, the follow-up may well be to try to teach the topic again using a different approach.

Finally, it is important to note that, irrespective of the strategy used, there is seldom a need to stick to the rigid conventions associated with traditional testing. For example, there is rarely a need to assess all pupils at the same time. It often makes more sense to assess individuals or groups when they are ready to take advantage of it. 'Testing corners' or folders containing assessment worksheets are amongst the strategies which we have seen used successfully by teachers.

## *HOW MIGHT WE PROMOTE SUCCESS IN LEARNING?*

Research into learning suggests that many factors combine to determine success. These include the learners' previous experience of the topic, their knowledge of and attitude to the subject area, physical problems both environmental and personal, their relationship with their teachers or their peers, their preferred learning styles or the extent to which they have developed the skills of learning. Some ways of getting at these are highlighted below.

*The particular topic being studied*

- Does the learner have the knowledge essential to cope with the learning task?
- Has the learner developed a particular concept sufficiently well to relate it to the task?
- Is the learner sufficiently competent in a particular skill to cope with the task?

*The subject area of the task*

- Is the learner interested in the subject in general?
- Is the learner interested in the particular topic?
- Does the learner have the confidence to believe that he or she can complete the task successfully?

*Personal physical problems*

- Is the learner colour blind and unable to relate to distinctions which depend on colour differentiation, for example sorting by colour or reading a map?
- Does the learner have a hearing problem which interferes when learning depends on spoken explanations?
- Does the learner have the motor control skills necessary to use instruments accurately?

*The 'affective' aspects of learning*

- Is the learner secure and confident, and not demotivated because of personal or emotional problems?
- Does the learner receive positive feedback to build confidence?
- Does the learner get on with the other pupils in the group?

*The physical environment*

- Is there sufficient light?
- Is concentration adversely affected by poor ventilation, high or low temperatures?
- Is there space to work?
- Is there a quiet area when needed?

*Interaction between teacher and learner*

- Does the learner respond well to the approach used to teach a particular task?
- Is the learner learning in a way which encourages meaningful learning?
- Is the teaching building on the learner's own perceptions of the topic and the task?

*Learning skills*

- Does the learner have an appropriate strategy to cope with the task?
- Can the learner reflect on the way he or she is learning?

This list may seem daunting. It is not presented here to suggest that teachers' diagnostic procedures should include questions or tasks designed to cover every

area but it would not be a true reflection of what we know if we suggested that pupils' learning is determined solely by previous teaching or previous exposure to the topic. In many cases it will be quite difficult to understand why one pupil understands something perfectly well while another experiences problems. It is at that point that the teacher has to ask whether some wider matter is acting as a barrier to learning.

## 2 ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Parts 2 and 3 of this guide will help teachers with the day-to-day assessment of English language within the context of English Language 5–14.

*Part 2* looks at various aspects of pupils' reading development: pupils' understanding of the purposes for which a text may be read; the pursuit of meaning within a text; and awareness of the ways in which authors may use language.

- Chapter 2 (Taking a closer look at learning to read) looks at the teaching and assessment of reading from the point of view of the purpose for which that reading is undertaken.

- Chapter 3 (Diagnostic procedures in reading) considers what is involved in taking a closer look at pupils' reading.

- Chapter 4 (Promoting success in reading) suggests ways in which diagnostic procedures may be put in practice.

- Chapter 5 (Areas for exploration) presents strategies which teachers can use to promote successful reading.

- Chapter 6 (Examples of diagnostic procedures in practice) provides examples of the use of diagnostic procedures by teachers in a variety of aspects of classroom teaching.

*Part 3* looks at the process of writing from the initial formulation of an idea, through drafting, revising, editing and on to eventual publication.

- Chapter 7 (Taking a closer look at learning to write) highlights the ideas which underline the teaching and assessment of writing.

- Chapter 8 (Diagnostic procedures in writing) is concerned with what is involved in taking a closer look at pupils' writing and suggests ways in which evidence can be gathered and acted upon.

- Chapter 9 (Areas for exploration) presents strategies which teachers can use to promote successful writing, looking in detail at those stages preparing for writing, drafting and redrafting, and preparing to publish.

## THE CLASSROOM CONTEXT

The material presented draws heavily upon a wide range of existing research and practice, much of which will already be familiar to teachers, and applies it in the context of Education 5–14. It aims to clarify and illustrate what is meant by a 'diagnostic procedure' and to help teachers to explore pupils' thinking as they work, and thus to guide learning more effectively.

In developing the materials, the project team worked alongside teachers in schools throughout the country to map out what 'taking a closer look' might mean

in classrooms where the 5–14 curriculum is being implemented. In doing this, every attempt was made to think of assessment as a broad-based procedure integral with teaching and learning.

Most of the suggestions in this guide are applicable in both primary and secondary school contexts. However, the differences in organisation of primary and secondary classes mean that teachers will sometimes have to interpret the materials to suit their own situations. Class size is an obvious case in point. The organisation of the school day is a further factor – the length of the average class period in secondary schools will influence what can be done and careful planning will be required to ensure that individual attention can be given to all pupils over time.

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Part 2

# *Taking a Closer Look at Reading*

Notes

# 2: *Taking a Closer Look at Learning to Read*

## *THE TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT OF READING*

Diagnostic assessment is an aspect of assessment as part of teaching. Its aim is to take a closer look at pupils' learning – to see how they are dealing with what they are doing, and to examine their strengths and needs in relation to particular tasks or learning targets. It explores pupils' thinking and reactions in order to enable the teacher to tailor teaching to pupils' individual needs.

Assessment 5–14 sets out four interrelated factors which affect learning:

*What is to be learned?*

- Teaching and learning aims should be clear and shared.

*Are the pupils motivated to learn?*

- Pupils are most likely to be successful when they are confident and enthusiastic about the task.

*Are the pupils ready to learn?*

- Effective learning should build on previous experience and take account of present abilities and specific needs.

*Are learning and teaching effective?*

- Tasks, activities and methods of learning and teaching should be designed thoughtfully, with clear purpose.

What does this mean in relation to reading?

### *Clear learning and teaching aims*

The question 'what is to be learned?' does not refer only to the teacher's learning aims for the pupils. The learners can be involved in specifying their own aims and criteria when reading a text. Pupils can be asked to consider questions like:

- what makes you want to listen to someone reading aloud?
- what does 'good reading' sound like?
- what do you hope to get from reading this book?

### *Motivation*

The quality of learning will depend upon how pupils view themselves as learners. Do they see themselves as successful learners who can approach tasks with confidence or have they learned not to expect success?

*English Language 5–14*, in the 'Programmes of Study' section, describes desirable features of the teaching of reading. Above all, it is important to help pupils to realise from the beginning that reading is a purposeful activity involving a search for meaning. It also calls on previous experience of life and of reading, and uses clues from the context and specific purpose of the activity, as well as from the text itself, to help 'make the meaning'. The growth of motivation to read, of a desire to know 'what it's about' or 'what happens next' or 'how to find out' is crucial. Good conditions for effective teaching of reading skills include the provision of a wide selection of colourful, interesting fiction and non-fiction and active encouragement of reading for enjoyment.

*Previous experience and present abilities*

Most children already have extensive experience of spoken language and many have a relatively wide awareness of print before they come to school. Effective teaching of reading builds on pre-existing language awareness and helps pupils develop an initial sight vocabulary and skills of 'word attack'.

Individual reading should be complemented by paired reading. Links between home and school where reading is a shared activity are also extremely valuable in helping to establish the importance of reading.

As the pupils get older and begin to read more complex texts, teaching will help to develop an understanding of genre. Exposure to a wide range of texts can serve to make pupils aware of how different texts are structured, and to develop their sense of style.

*Effective tasks and flexible teaching methods*

Diagnostic assessment in reading will be concerned mainly with finding out how pupils are interpreting and carrying out a wide variety of reading tasks. Some evidence will be found in written responses but more will come from observing and discussing with the pupils. Discussion will encourage them to reflect on their own work and think about how progress might best be made.

It is not possible to isolate the pupils' reading of particular texts or types of text from their wider understanding of the world, from the teaching they have received or from their previous experiences. It may nevertheless be helpful for both teachers and pupils to consider separately general reading skills and the pupil's particular approach to specific types of reading task, even though they are inextricably linked.

Traditional analyses of reading into sets of apparently distinct sub-skills give a false impression that these can be separately assessed and taught. It is not useful to separate 'lower order' skills (for example, 'literal comprehension') and 'higher order' ones (for example, 'inferences'). In any piece of reading, at any level of difficulty or sophistication, pupils might be employing any or all of the 'sub-skills', recognising the literal meaning of what is written and making inferences by relating it to their own experience.

There has been general agreement among researchers and teachers for a long time that language development, whether 'receptive', (reading and listening) or 'productive' (writing and talking), benefits from using and thinking about language in purposeful activity.

## *A PURPOSES APPROACH TO READING*

It is important that pupils play a role in determining what to read and for what purposes.

Pupils do, however, sometimes need guidance from the teacher as to what to look for in a particular text. They may be encouraged, for example, to read for information, or to compare and contrast different narrative perspectives. The following are examples of a task devised with reading purpose in mind.

***Example A: Sir Mark the Valiant***

The pupils would already have had the chance to read the whole of this short story about a little boy's vivid dream adventure. They could then be asked to read the following passage (which is the opening of the story) looking for certain things:

- *how we can tell that Mark thought the castle was wonderful and almost real.* (Pupils might highlight or underline all the information about this and discuss any differences of view.)
- *what we find out about Mark's whooping cough and how it made him feel.* (Again pupils might highlight this information, using a different colour or underline with a broken line; and discuss.)
- *the moment when the castle suddenly seemed different.* (Pupils might put a box round the sentence or two sentences.)
- *all the words in the last paragraph which tell us about the way Sir Guy and his horse moved.* (Pupils might highlight, or list; and discuss any differing views.)

**Sir Mark the Valiant**

There was once a little boy called Mark who had to stay in bed because he had whooping cough. His friends couldn't visit him in case they too caught the whooping cough, but he didn't really mind, as he had something very special to play with.

That something special was a castle which stood on a little table by Mark's bed. It had a tower and ramparts and a moat with a drawbridge over it, and it was made to look as if it had been built long, long ago. Actually, it was made in a modern factory, and Mark's father had bought it cheaply in a sale. But Mark hated to hear his mother tell people it was cheap; he thought it was so grand and beautiful, it ought to have cost lots and lots of money.

Mark also had a flag which he put on the tower and a handsome knight, dressed in white armour and riding on a white horse with a long mane and tail. The knight he called Sir Guy and he put him on the ramparts to keep a watch for enemies. The horse had its head turned a little, as if it was looking for enemies to come and attack the castle from behind.

There were many windows in the castle; in the tower, which had a winding staircase, there were narrow slits and in the top of the tower there was just one window with bars.

'That is where Sir Guy puts his prisoners,' Mark told his mother.

The little boy played with the castle all day long, and at night when his mother put it back on the table, he would lie gazing at it till he fell asleep. Sometimes the coughing would be so bad that it made his eyes water so that he saw everything through a haze; then the castle seemed to be shimmering with lights from every window – except one; the barred window in the tower was always dark.

'Sir Guy will put the light on when he puts his prisoner there,' said Mark.

One night he had been coughing and whooping so much that both his father and mother had sat with him, one holding his poor head and the other his hand. At last it stopped and he could breathe more comfortably. So his mother gave him some medicine and his father tucked him up, and then they both said goodnight and put out the light.

Mark was very tired; he lay there rubbing his eyes and then he looked at the castle. It looked so beautiful with the lights shimmering in every window – every window? Mark sat up in bed; even the barred window in the tower was lit up tonight! And what was that? Surely Sir Guy was moving? Yes, his head was moving from side to side, and now he was lifting his hand to shade his eyes, as if he was searching for something in the distance. Now the horse moved its head too and pawed the ground with its right foreleg!

Suddenly Sir Guy dug his spurs in, galloped over the drawbridge and headed his horse straight up the counterpane towards Mark's chest! It looked as if he were riding through a flowery meadow and the horse's mane and tail were flying in the wind!



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***Example B: The Lonely Scarecrow***

Pupils might be asked to work out:

- *what the scarecrow looks like, what is his appearance?*
- *what he feels about himself*
- *whether his feelings are at all like the way some people feel.*

**The Lonely Scarecrow**

My poor old bones – I've only two.
A broomstick and a broken stave.
My ragged gloves are a disgrace.
My one peg-foot is in the grave.
I wear the labourer's old clothes:
Coat, shirt, and trousers all undone.
I bear my cross upon a hill.
In rain and shine, in snow and sun.
I cannot help the way I look.
My funny hat is full of hay.
– O, wild birds, come and nest in me.
Why do you always fly away?

James Kirkup

The teacher might read the poem aloud, perhaps twice, and ensure that the pupils understood any difficult words (for example labourer, stave). Pupils might then be asked to read the poem carefully and to discuss the questions given above.

Among the more specific questions the teacher might ask (in writing or orally) in order to assist pupils' thinking might be:

- what is the scarecrow made of? – try to find all the things mentioned.
- which words or phrases in particular, in each verse, tell us something about what the scarecrow thinks or feels about himself?
- [For some pupils] why do you think James Kirkup wrote 'I bear my cross upon a hill'? what does this mean? does it remind you of anything or anyone?
- what does he want the birds to do? why? why do they not do it?
- the scarecrow and how he feels could remind us of what happens to some people. Can you think of anyone who might feel like the scarecrow and say 'I cannot help the way I look'?
- what does the poem make us feel about the scarecrow and about other people?

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# 3: Diagnostic Procedures in Reading

## *WHAT IS INVOLVED?*

Learning to read, like learning to do anything else, is a complex process. As children differ greatly in their approach to learning to read, it is not possible to propose a set of specific diagnostic procedures which would always be applied in the same way and in the same order. Deciding how to gather evidence on pupils' progress, appraising the evidence and exploring with the pupils how best to move forward inevitably involves professional judgement by the teacher. It is important to use diagnostic procedures to help pupils themselves to become more clearly aware of what they have been trying to achieve. Teachers can also introduce them to strategies which they can use to help them deal with the requirements of different reading tasks.

The teacher's professional judgement is also important in deciding when to support the pupil's reading (chapter 1 offers more detailed information on this). Pupils are likely to benefit from the teacher's guidance before embarking on particular tasks. Intervention through questioning and group discussion may be valuable during reading, to ensure attention to important aspects of the text and to find out how pupils are constructing the meaning of the text. It is also possible to use pupils' responses to a particular text to explore further their thinking on a topic.

## *OBTAINING EVIDENCE*

Evidence of what is happening during reading may be obtained in a number of different ways, from the day-to-day activities of observing and questioning pupils, and from special tasks, including tests. These will enable the teacher to see whether pupils have clear ideas of what they want from the text and whether the task is pitched at the right level for the pupil's ability.

While most information, or evidence, will come from day-to-day activities, it is likely that teachers will design special tasks for specific purposes. Teachers may wish to find out pupils' ideas about a topic before they undertake a task, and at the end of a topic they will want to try to identify what has been learned. In addition teachers may use tasks or tests designed by others. For example when they believe that a pupil has moved from one level to another they will use items from the bank of national test items to confirm their professional judgement; or they may choose to build into their existing teaching programmes a commercially designed task to help identify appropriate next steps for pupils.

## *FOCUSING ON GROWTH POINTS AND ACTING ON EVIDENCE*

In any particular reading task, diagnostic observation, questioning and discussion should be focused on a small number of aspects of reading which the pupil can develop or improve. Diagnostic assessment is principally concerned with identifying and working from the pupil's own thinking. The focus should be on areas which both teacher and pupil regard as important, and the aim should be to develop skills which the pupil already possesses to some extent.

One effective way of focusing on something the pupil can deal with is to observe and discuss with three questions in mind:

- what is being done successfully?
  - from the pupil's perspective
  - from the teacher's perspective.
- what is being attempted, perhaps without full success?
- what skills does the pupil lack?

In addition, groups of pupils working together supportively with clearly defined criteria for success can also offer helpful insights into 'next steps' for themselves and others.

A crucial element in diagnostic assessment is working with pupils to enable them to move on. This involves the identification of the most helpful next steps and strategies either in continuing work on the current task or in setting the next task. Some suggestions for various types of possible action are given in chapter 5.

The final chapter provides examples of teachers supporting pupils' learning by identifying areas for exploration and suggesting possible next steps.

Most diagnostic assessment, and the related teaching, occurs on an ad hoc basis in the course of ordinary classroom activity. From time to time it is useful to use the individual 5–14 assessment record. This enables the pupil, the teacher, and the pupil's next teacher, to make use of the diagnostic assessment in a range of different ways in future activities, in planning blocks of teaching and in discussion with parents.

# 4: Promoting Success in Reading: Using The Procedures in Practice

Teachers use their professional judgement in the application of diagnostic procedures. Their approach may vary according to the individual pupil, the particular task and the particular circumstances. Individual pupils can be helped to read more effectively if the teacher working with the pupil focuses attention on the pupil's ways of dealing with reading tasks, builds on successes and finds ways round difficulties. It is suggested, however, that there are three key stages in any diagnostic teaching, three procedures which characterise the diagnostic teacher:

- areas for exploration are identified
- questions related to each area are considered
- next steps for the pupil to take are identified and both teacher and pupil have a clear idea of what these are and of how to approach them.

This section, based on research into reading and studies of best practice, suggests strategies which teachers can use to encourage effective reading.

### *AREAS FOR EXPLORATION*

*English Language 5–14* identified 6 'strands' of reading based on purposes for reading: reading for information; reading for enjoyment; reading to reflect on the writer's ideas and craft; awareness of genre or type of text; reading aloud; and knowledge about language.

In any reading task, whatever its purpose, pupils seek meaning: they try to make sense of what is on the page in terms of their own experience and use this and the context of the particular text to make predictions about the continuation of a sentence, chapter, theme or plot. This process of predicting and searching for a meaning can be the means of achieving fluency. But it can also sometimes impede understanding of what is written, because readers, influenced by previous knowledge, can make wrong guesses about what the text is actually communicating. It may be helpful to consider four 'areas for exploration' to be considered in helping pupils to search for meaning effectively:

- attitude and motivation – to reading in general and to the particular task being undertaken
- decoding – how the pupils recognise words and sentences
- pursuit of meaning – how the pupils learn to use prior experience and all the context cues in the text to construct their own perception of what is being communicated
- awareness of the author's use of language – how the pupils learn about the choice of words, images and their structures to convey meaning, suggest ideas, and achieve effects.

Though these four aspects of reading are in practice interrelated, it is useful to think of them separately for the purposes of analysing pupils' work, recognising their strengths and identifying appropriate next steps.

All four areas for exploration will be relevant in any kind of reading task. For each there is a continuum of complexity, unfamiliarity, and difficulty as the texts become more advanced. Expectations of beginning and less advanced readers should be appropriate for their actual stage of progress. Reading for certain purposes may entail 'sub-areas', for example reading for information involves using various information-finding skills. Often the emphasis might be on improving reading in respect of just one or two aspects of one or two of these areas, identifying 'growth points' which the pupil can develop.

### *QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER*

Within each area for exploration a number of possible 'questions to consider' have been identified. The lists on the pages which follow are examples of the types of question which teachers might ask to help them obtain quality information about the pupils' thinking. Finding out what the pupils think and what they consider important is crucial if appropriate next steps are to be identified. It is also extremely useful to work with the pupil to identify questions which could be used.

### *POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS*

Linked to the questions to consider are suggestions for helping children to improve their reading. These are suggestions which teachers, or teachers and pupils in partnership, may wish to consider as they decide on an appropriate course of action. In the identification of good 'next steps', it is important to recognise the pupil as a valuable source of evidence! Which next steps does the learner think are likely to be most effective? Discussion with the pupil is crucial.

The suggestions must be set in the context of each particular pupil's reading development and related to the pupil's other learning experiences. What does the child think will help him or her to read better? Skills developed in particular tasks will not transfer easily to other contexts unless bridges are built for learners and the learners themselves are encouraged not only to 'see' the bridges but to be able to explain them to themselves and others.

In summary, to ensure effectiveness of next steps, it may prove helpful to:

- have pupils explain the task they intend to undertake and its purpose
- encourage pupils to make the link between the task and other aspects of their reading
- highlight similar examples as they occur in reading across the curriculum as part of ordinary classwork.

### *IN CONCLUSION*

Development of more effective reading skills is a lifelong process. There are unlikely to be quick or easy answers but a systematic, sustained approach will support the reading development of all learners.

# 5: Areas for Exploration

This chapter focuses on the four areas for exploration and offers a framework for progress in the form of questions to be considered. These questions are not intended to be a rigid sequential checklist: they are intended to be used flexibly to help the teacher to identify action and next steps for individual pupils.

The four areas of the reading process have been subdivided as follows:

*1: **Attitude and motivation (pages 20 to 21)***

- enjoyment
- concentration
- confidence
- valuing reading

*2: **Decoding: recognising words and sequences (pages 22 to 23)***

- word recognition
- reading aloud
- using punctuation
- function of words

*3: **Pursuit of meaning (pages 24 to 27)***

- gaining meaning
- devices to aid meaning
- using a range of strategies
- use of dictionaries
- linking to experience
- identifying key points

*4: **Awareness of author's use of language (pages 28 to 29)***

- author's stance
- use of language
- genre

This booklet is an attempt to bring together features of existing good practice – much of what it contains should reassure teachers about what they already do rather than reveal anything new or radical.

The aim has been to present a framework within which reading can be taught. It is *not* intended that teachers do everything that is presented within this framework with every pupil and for every piece of reading. The process outlined is an ideal and many factors will affect the way the teachers translate it into practice. However we hope that while teachers will concentrate on particular aspects of the process at any one time, it will prove useful to have in mind the larger structure into which individual aspects fit.

The final chapter illustrates what might be done in specific cases.

# Attitude and Motivation

| *SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER* | *POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS* |
|---|---|
| **Enjoyment** | |
| *Do the pupils approach reading with enthusiasm? Do they expect to enjoy reading?* | *To build pupils' enthusiasm, you might:*<br>• ask the pupils to identify areas of interest and to offer texts on such areas<br>• ask the pupils to think of an occasion when they enjoyed reading and then to work together to identify the particular features of the experience which made it enjoyable<br>• build in opportunities for 'reward' or 'recognition' for having undertaken reading tasks: for example, by praising the pupil individually or in front of the group or class<br>• share your own enthusiasm for a particular text<br>• ask the pupil to read a text with a specific purpose in mind, one which boosts pupils' sense of their own importance, eg 'I'm not sure whether or not we should put this text into the school library ... could you read this and tell me what you think?'<br>• ask pupils to recommend books to one another<br>• access more demanding texts in which the pupil is interested, eg by drawing on other teachers' class libraries, the school library, the regional/divisional library service<br>• provide time for reading for enjoyment and ensure an attractive stock of library books. |
| **Concentration** | |
| *Do the pupils seem to find it difficult to concentrate on the text?* | *To build concentration on reading you might:*<br>• talk with the pupils to find out if they are enjoying the text<br>• raise the idea of 'concentration' and discuss with the pupils ways of developing concentration: for example, 'Sometimes I find it difficult to concentrate on reading. What do you do when you want to concentrate on a piece of reading?'<br>• find out if the level of text is appropriate by, for example, asking the pupils to tell you the 'story so far'<br>• talk with the pupils to find out if they know why they are being asked to read a particular text<br>• consider the classroom: for example, is the atmosphere quiet and relaxed and therefore conducive to reading?<br>• establish a reading 'climate' by discussing and agreeing with pupils the conditions likely to promote a quality reading environment<br>• identify a comfortable reading area where pupils can go to read<br>• ensure that there are texts at a range of levels of difficulty and that the texts are attractive<br>• offer pupils the opportunity to choose an alternative text, having carefully identified the reasons for choosing another text and building in a commitment to read through the new text chosen. |

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# Attitude and Motivation

| SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER | POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS |
|---|---|
| **Confidence** | |
| *Do the pupils approach reading with confidence?* | *To build confidence in reading you might:*<br>• guide the pupils' choice to texts which are well within their capabilities and which can be read fairly quickly<br>• ask the pupils to list all the things to do with reading which they are 'good' at<br>• offer the pupils a range of short easily accessible texts, so that they can build a record of texts completed; and praise each pupil's work<br>• build in less demanding exposure to a variety of texts by getting older pupils to read aloud to novice readers and letting them frequently read/listen individually with an adult or on tape<br>• help the pupils into a more 'difficult' text on a topic of interest to them by introducing key items of vocabulary in advance. |
| **Valuing reading** | |
| *Do the pupils see reading as important?* | *To increase the pupils' perception of the value of reading you might:*<br>• ask pupils what reasons they have for developing their reading, sharing with them the aims of particular tasks or encouraging them to identify their own aims<br>• set reading tasks in real life contexts where pupils have to use reading skills to 'make things happen'<br>• show that you as a teacher value 'reading time' by establishing it as part of normal classwork<br>• build links between home and school encouraging parents to work with their children, perhaps using home/school diaries<br>• acknowledge the value of reading tasks by establishing reading groups where pupils can discuss with one another texts they have enjoyed and would recommend to others<br>• discuss with pupils your own enjoyment of reading. |

*Notes*

# Decoding (Recognising Words and Sequences)

| SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER | POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS |
|---|---|
| **Word recognition** | |
| *Do the pupils recognise words and relate them to objects, events, people, relationships etc?* | *To build up word recognition you might:*<br>• introduce the pupils to words, labels, sentences on display in the classroom<br>• talk with the pupils to find out how they find it easier to learn new words, eg by looking and remembering or by sounding out; then use the agreed strategy to build up new vocabulary<br>• sometimes use a technique of 'look-say-cover-write' to help the pupils to develop awareness of the 'shape' of words which do not lend themselves easily to learning by a letter-sound approach<br>• sometimes reinforce the pupils' word attack by giving focused practice on letter-sound relationships relevant to types of 'new' words<br>• encourage the pupils to build up a word bank, where words are collected under headings or categories, eg 'words from the kitchen' or 'words we use in mathematics'<br>• use word games in which pupils work together, eg building up points for recognising words. |
| **Reading aloud** | |
| *Do the pupils read aloud confidently?* | *To build skills in reading aloud you might:*<br>• give them time to read the text silently before asking them to read aloud<br>• read aloud with the pupils or to have the pupils work with a more fluent reader to encourage them to pick up the rhythm of reading (paired reading projects involving parents or older pupils working with other pupils are often highly successful).<br>• not correct mistakes as the pupil is reading and thus interrupt the 'flow', but note issues arising as future teaching points. |
| **Using punctuation** | |
| *Do the pupils use punctuation when they are reading?* | *To increase awareness of the need to use punctuation when reading, you might:*<br>• ask pupils to work in pairs reading alternate sentences<br>• ask pupils to go through a paragraph and to put in a line after every full stop. Then ask them to read the passage aloud, stopping at every line<br>• read aloud with the pupils asking them to keep pace with you. As you pause at full stops the pupils should begin to internalise the rhythm of reading. |

# Decoding (Recognising Words and Sequences)

*SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER*

**Function of words**

***Are the pupils aware of the function of words in sentences? For example do they recognise the relationship between things expressed by prepositions? Do they realise when words are operating as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs (even if they are not familiar with these terms)?***

*POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS*

***To increase awareness of the function of words, you might:***

- begin from the pupils' own writing and discuss how words convey meaning and how choosing certain words can create pictures, for example
  - naming things, events or people (nouns)
  - showing something happening (verb)
  - describing things, events or people (adjectives)
  - describing *how* something is happening (adverbs)
- ask the pupils to think about the 'picture' the writer is trying to create and which words help to build the 'picture'
- ask the pupils to draw a character or event using information from the text, then encourage them to think about which words from the story helped to create the drawing.

*Notes*

# Pursuit of Meaning

| SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER | POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS |
|---|---|
| **Gaining meaning** | |
| *Do the pupils expect to gain meaning from reading?* | *To build up awareness of the importance of gaining meaning from reading, you might:*<br>• ask them to carry out a small research task, having first established what they would like to find out<br>• offer information which the pupils have to read before carrying out a physical task<br>• provide the pupils with instructions for a task for their group and ask them to read these and then to relay the key instructions to other group members<br>• provide a small group of pupils with the first part of a story and ask them to try to work out the ending using 'clues' from the first part<br>• offer the pupils a passage with, for example, every tenth word missing ('cloze') and ask the individual or group to complete the blanks with words which make sense<br>• help the pupils to 'expect' the words in the text by discussing in advance the objects, events, people, or relationships referred to.<br>Pupils might be asked to think about the topic and any words or ideas connected to it, or to tell one another or the teacher the important things they know about it. Video, photographs, exchange of experiences can also be helpful. Sometimes pupils might write about a topic themselves before reading. |
| **Devices to aid meaning** | |
| *Are the pupils aware of the need to consider headings, sub-headings, pictures, diagrams, etc to help build meaning?* | *To build awareness of the use of headings, sub-headings, etc, you might:*<br>• offer text, or ask pupils to identify pieces of text for one another (for example a newspaper page), with only headings and photographs and ask pupils to predict what the articles will contain; then ask them to compare their thoughts with the actual articles.<br>(This strategy may also be used to highlight inappropriate use of headings, photographs, etc.)<br>• offer a small group of pupils a piece of text, and ask them to discuss appropriate titles<br>• ask pupils specifically to note ways in which the writer 'helps' the reader by providing information to guide the reader through the text. |

# Pursuit of Meaning

*SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER*

*POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS*

## Using a range of strategies

***Do the pupils use a range of reading strategies appropriate to the purpose of reading (eg: skimming through to get the gist; scanning for particular ideas or words; reading straight through from beginning to end; using the context to work out the meaning of particular words and sentences)?***

***To build the pupils' range of reading strategies you might:***

- discuss with them the different types of reading task and ask a small group to tell each other how they would go about each task
- make explicit the processes of skimming and scanning and build opportunities to develop these into day-to-day reading activities
- ask pupils, working in pairs, to time each other as they scan for particular words; or to find a list of words as quickly as possible
- ask pupils to read quickly through a piece of text to inform others of the key ideas
- 'box', or ask pupils to 'box', sections of text containing ideas related to one another, or ideas which explain or expand on another idea; and discuss how the ideas boxed are connected
- ask pupils to use 'boxing' or underlining to identify parts of the text where ideas may explain or be linked to a word, phrase or sentence they do not understand; to discuss possible meanings, in view of the context; and to check with a dictionary
- use 'cloze' text (with for example every tenth word missing) to encourage discussion of possible words to fill the gaps
- use 'sequencing' activities (text cut up into sections and placed by pupils in appropriate order after discussion) to encourage and make explicit the use of context clues.

## Use of dictionaries

***Do the pupils know how and when to use a dictionary?***

Whenever possible, work using dictionaries should be linked into 'real' reading tasks. While it may be appropriate to offer a limited number of tasks to help pupils become familiar with the mechanics of using a dictionary, dictionary exercises are, on the whole, of limited value. It is also important to remember that a dictionary is useful only when the pupil understands most of the text, but does not know the occasional word.

***To develop skills in coping independently with new words, you might:***

- discuss with the pupil how to use a dictionary for example to:
  - find words alphabetically by first letter (perhaps at first providing an alphabet)
  - use the second, then third letters of the word
  - note the words at the top of each page, telling you the first and last word
  - consider all the meanings given and compare them with the context of the text, to make sure that the most suitable meaning is selected
  - recognise how the meanings given are structured in the dictionary (for example oldest first, newer later; original then derived meanings; most common meaning followed by less common)
  - distinguish between the various meanings of the same words
  - understand 'signals' in the dictionary entry: for example 'n' = noun, 'v' = verb, 'adj' = adjective etc
- provide a simpler dictionary, if pupils find a complex one confusing
- provide opportunities for pupils to use appropriate dictionaries as part of other reading tasks.

# Pursuit of Meaning

| SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER | POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS |
|---|---|
| **Linking to experience** | |
| *Do the pupils link what is being read to their previous experience?* | *To build awareness of linking what is read to previous ideas, you might:*<br>• ask pupils to make explicit their existing ideas about a topic, for example ask a small group to note down ideas before they start reading<br>• ask pupils to identify an area of interest, for example sport, discuss what interests them about it and locate articles related to the topics<br>• use a stimulus such as video, television, photographs and ask pupils to note important points from that. Then provide a piece of text on a similar topic and ask them to discuss ideas which were the same in both and ideas which were different<br>• provide a piece of text and ask pupils to note from the text:<br>– ideas we knew already<br>– new ideas. |
| *Do the pupils bring in their own ideas in a way which interferes with what the writer is saying?* | *To highlight awareness of the difference between their own thoughts and ideas and the writer's, you might:*<br>• make the difference explicit by asking the pupil to think about the text from two different perspectives:<br>– what do you think about ...?<br>– what does the writer/character think about ...? |
| *Do the pupils use what they already know about the topic to make inferences as they read?* | *To encourage 'close reading' for inference, you might:*<br>• engage pupils frequently in 'close reading' and discussion of not only the literal meaning but also the implications of the ideas and events, or choice and organisation of words<br>• use the 'reading purposes' approach to guide pupils in the kind of thinking and discussion which develops ability to explain what is read in terms of what they know already; and to make references using their general knowledge and experience. |
| *Are the ideas in the text unfamiliar to the pupils?* | *If the text is evidently presenting pupils with new ideas, you might:*<br>• provide the chance to understand, experience, discuss the topic and the concepts (visits, explanations, video etc, might be helpful).<br>• provide reading material better matched to pupils' experience. |

# Pursuit of Meaning

| SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER | POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS |
|---|---|
| **Identifying key points** | |
| *Are the pupils able to identify the main points from a text?* | *To develop skills in recognising main ideas, you might:*<br>• discuss with the pupils what they understand by a 'main idea'<br>• ask the pupils to tell you, or another pupil, what the text is about, perhaps by setting the task in a context such as 'Imagine your friend has been off school and missed the first part of this story. What would you tell them to help them to be able to understand the rest of the story?'<br>• offer the pupils a piece of text and a number of statements, some of which are main ideas; ask the pupils in pairs to decide which of the statements are main ideas<br>• ask the pupils in pairs or as a small group to read a series of paragraphs and create a title for each paragraph. |
| *Are the pupils able to follow a line of argument through a piece of reading?* | *To develop skills in following a line of argument, you might:*<br>• offer pupils an article with a clear line of argument and ask them to state the author's position and locate all the 'evidence' the author puts forward to support this position<br>• provide pupils with a piece of text and a series of statements, some with which the author would agree and some with which the author would disagree; ask pupils to read the text and then select which statement agrees with the author's position<br>• engage the pupils in some 'sequencing' work, in which they discuss the appropriate order for segments of a text, with explicit encouragement to focus on, for example, steps towards a conclusion, or advantages – disadvantages – concluding judgement (etc. according to the type of argument in the text). |

*Notes*

# Awareness of Author's Use of Language

| SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER | POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS |
|---|---|
| **Author's stance** | |
| *Are the pupils able to recognise the author's point of view or standpoint in writing?* | *To foster awareness of the author's point of view you might:*<br>• offer pupils examples of texts where the author's point of view is very evident (for example in argument or persuasion) and ask them to identify what the writer is saying<br>• invite pupils to think about an advertisement and to change it to create a different effect, eg to repel the reader<br>• ask pupils to write or talk about the same theme/incident from differing points of view, eg the points of view of different characters in a story. |
| **Use of language** | |
| *Are the pupils able to appreciate how the author has used language to create particular effects?* | *To encourage awareness of the effects of particular language use you might:*<br>• offer a piece of text where various devices (for example italics, bold, print, underlining) have been used and ask pupils to discuss possible reasons for this and whether or not they think that the use of these devices is helpful<br>• invite pupils to identify advertisements which they like, to discuss the reasons for their choice, and to describe ways in which the person who created the advertisement tries to encourage people to like it and therefore buy the product<br>• ask pupils to choose a piece of text and to account for their reactions by referring to the text – what makes a particular part sad, funny, shocking, tense?<br>• ask pupils to identify a story which they would describe as, eg a ghost story or a love story or a horror story, and to identify the reasons why they would describe the text in this way (perhaps giving headings such as 'choice of words', 'descriptions of characters', 'parts of the story'). |
| *Are the pupils able to appreciate how the author has used language to create particular effects?* | • ask pupils to experiment with the mood or atmosphere of a text by substituting different words (in a 'cloze'-type passage with adverbs and adjectives omitted, for example) to achieve quite different effects<br>• identify ways in which authors often describe one thing as being like something else, or as being something else, in order to communicate an idea more effectively, for example 'the little dog roared like a lion', or 'his legs turned to jelly'<br>• encourage pupils to identify similes and metaphors in their own language and then to explore the use of devices such as these in their own writing and in texts they are reading<br>• in general, engage pupils frequently in 'close reading', encouraging them to think and talk about all the ideas, feelings or senses that the author's choice and organisation of words bring to their mind. |

# Awareness of Author's Use of Language

*SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER*

**Genre**

***Are the pupils aware of the main characteristics of genre?***

*POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS*

***To encourage pupils to be more aware of different genres, you might:***

- display different forms and patterns of print – eg poems, stories, scripts, and offer opportunities for pupils to discuss these, identifying features of each
- give options in the tasks offered for pupils' own writing, eg an incident/event written as a letter or as a newspaper article
- offer pupils three pieces of text, two of which relate to one genre and the third to another and ask the pupils to consider the three texts, identify the two which they think have most in common and give reasons for their choice
- offer opportunities for pupils to change a piece of writing from one genre to another – for example, from a story to a script
- ask pupils to identify the possible reasons for a writer having chosen to write using a particular genre
- ask pupils to consider two pieces of text on a similar theme, but written in different genres, eg a story and a poem, and ask them to identify which one they prefer and to give reasons for their decision.

*Notes*

# 6: Examples of Diagnostic Procedures in Practice

This chapter contains examples of diagnostic procedures in reading being used in practice. The examples have been drawn from practical piloting of the procedures in primary and secondary schools.

The first five examples illustrate how classwork can be used as information on pupils' learning:

- use of a reading scheme: see 'Colin' and 'Amrik'
- use of non-fiction texts: see 'Kerry' and 'Lisa'
- use of a class novel: see 'John'.

The final example illustrates the use of national tests: see 'Clare'.

Each example contains:

- a pen portrait – brief background information on a pupil including in some cases particular learning aims for that pupil
- the task used
- analysis of the pupil's response, referring to the diagnostic procedures described in the accompanying booklet
- identification of possible 'next steps' to help the pupil to progress.

The analyses and the identification of next steps draw on the areas for exploration described in Chapter 5:

- attitudes and motivation
- decoding
- pursuit of meaning
- awareness of author's language use.

The examples present the responses to reading of pupils at different stages of development. The particular stage for each pupil is not given, however, nor the pupil's age. This is because the examples are illustrations of assessment which is useful for the pupil whatever the age or level of reading ability. It is a process of exploring *how* the pupil has gone about the reading task, and of using the resulting assessment information to help the pupil read more effectively.

There is no one definite way of analysing such information. Teachers will be guided by their knowledge of the pupil's previous progress and ways of learning.

# Evidence from Classwork
## – Example 1: Colin – Use of a reading scheme

***Pen portrait***

Colin does not like reading but he does like *Fuzzbuzz* stories. He is now on his eleventh story and worked very hard in class. Recently he has been taking reading home.

### *THE TASK*

His task was to read aloud one of the pages he had worked on at home and then to complete the sentences. The italicised words and other markings on the text show how Colin actually read it aloud. The text was accompanied by a cartoon of Big Don and Little Don in tammies and tartan, showing Big Don bumping Little Don with his elbow.

***Reading aloud***

*Line 1 Big-Ben-does-not-see-little-things./*
*(tips)*
*Line 2 He-tnps-up-on them./*
*(tips)*
*Line 3 He-tnps-up-on-things-in-the-hills./*
*(tips)*
*Line 4 He-tnps-up-on-things-in-the-glen./*
*(tips)*
*Line 5 He-tnps -up-on-things-in-his-croft./*
*(tips)*
*Line 6 He-does-not-tnp-up-on-big-things./*
B
*Line 7 because-he-can-see-them./*
*(tips)*
*Line 8 But-he-does-tnp-up-on-little-things./*
*(tips)*
*Line 9 In-the-end-he-tnps-up-on-little-Don./*

*- = short pause / = longer pause*

***Sentence completion***

*Words: little tnps croft Don*

1. Big Ben does not see Don things.
2. He tips up on them.
3. He trips up on things in his croft.
4. In the end he trips up on Little little.

### *COLIN'S RESPONSE TO THE TEXT*

Colin read with enthusiasm one word at a time and took a big breath at the end of every sentence/line. He began line 7 as if beginning a new sentence. He recognised all the words but consistently read 'tips' instead of 'trips'. He completed the sentences very quickly, getting two of them correct.

The teacher discussed Colin's approach to the task with him:

Teacher: Can you tell me how to do this?

Colin: Well, you put the words at the top of the page into the spaces.

Teacher: How do you know which ones to put in which spaces?

Colin: It's about the story.

Teacher: How did you decide which word to put in which space?

Colin: It was easy. You read the story and get the answers .... so .. Big Ben does not see Don. He tips up on them. He tips up on things in his croft. And you have to use all the words so the last one is *little*.

### *AREAS FOR EXPLORATION AND POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS*

The teacher identified these as follows:

'I would not concentrate on attitude and motivation with Colin. He enjoys *Fuzzbuzz* and is working hard. To begin with I would concentrate on decoding.

In decoding I think there are two questions to consider. The first is does Colin recognise the word 'trip' and does he know what it means? It was interesting that he made the same mistake when reading and when he completed the sentence. He wrote 'tips' and not 'tnps'. I shall need to talk to him about that. I think that the most important 'next step' for Colin just now is about punctuation when reading. He reads lines as if they were sentences. If you look at his first answer – Don – it's right if you don't notice the word 'things' on the next line. Colin and Peter work well together. We talked about sentences and now they are taking turns to read sentences from their reading book.

One other thing: I will add in more words to choose from in future, so that he can't just put the last word into the last space without reading it! I also think it is important to help Colin be a more fluent reader .... perhaps paired reading might help.'

***Notes***

# Evidence from Classwork
## – Example 2: Amrik – Use of a reading scheme

***Pen portrait***

Amrik is a quiet boy who normally has to be coaxed to contribute to class discussion, but who often takes a book from the class library and especially enjoys stories read to the class by the teacher or heard on tape.

### THE TASK

Amrik has read the following passage with the teacher, in his group from the group's current reader (Ginn Reading 360 Programme Level 7 Book 2).

***How the bear found his food***

There was no noise in the forest.

There was no noise in the forest.

Rabbits hopped about, nibbling the wild grass and flowers.

Chipmunks ran up and down an old oak tree looking for acorns.

A little mouse came creeping ... creeping ...

There was no noise in the forest – only the birds sang.

And then, CRASH – BANG, a bear – a big black bear – came into the forest.

The rabbits didn't move.

The chipmunks were still.

The mouse ran under a log.

The birds called an alarm and flew to the tree-tops.

The bear stopped under the oak tree.

He was a hungry bear – a very hungry bear.

He looked up into the tree.

There in the oak tree was his food – a meal of fat acorns. But the acorns were high – high up in the tree.

The hungry bear could not reach them.

He climbed into the tree.

Up, up he climbed. But he did not reach for the acorns.

He crawled out on a big branch of the tree. He sat there and then he rocked the branch. Up and down. Up and down.

And the branch broke with a CRASH – BANG!

Down they fell, branch and acorns and big black bear. CRASH – BANG!

The bear rolled over. He sat up and looked around. With his big paws, he reached for the acorns. He reached for more, and he ate his fill.

And while he ate the acorns, the rabbits and the chipmunks were still. Only the birds called.

When he couldn't eat any more, the bear went out of the forest with a crash and a bang.

And when he was gone, the rabbits hopped about again, nibbling the grass.

Chipmunks ran high up into the tree and down again, and hid acorns in the bushes.

The little mouse came creeping ... creeping ... Again there was no noise in the forest – only the birds sang in the old oak tree.'

In the book the story is illustrated, so pupils are helped by seeing pictures of the animals and of the bear climbing along the branch. Before reading the story with the group, the teacher asked them to look out for certain important parts of it:

- how the animals felt and what they were doing at the start
- how they reacted to the bear
- how the bear managed to get at the acorns and
- how the animals were after the bear had gone.

She invited them to read it all silently, on their own, and then they each read a section of it aloud. After this, the teacher questioned the group, concentrating on the points she had asked them to think about, and also on the use of capital letters, dashes and (...) in the story.

### AMRIK'S RESPONSE TO THE TASK

Amrik read the story silently quite slowly, following the text with his finger. His reading aloud was also painstaking, though he did recognise most of the words with little difficulty. Only two which could be 'sounded' with a phonic 'attack' caused him a problem: 'nibbling' and 'alarm'; but he was also stumped by or hesitated about 'wild', 'acorns', 'high' and 'ate'. There was also some hesitancy about 'chipmunks'. In several cases Amrik read across full stops, not reading with appropriate expression.

When he talked about the story, Amrik tended to want to give a lot of information about bears he had seen at the zoo (which the teacher related to the story, explaining that the ones he had seen were white polar bears that lived in icy regions, not black ones that came into forests). However, with some prompting from the teacher, Amrik showed that he understood the sequence: quiet, normal, happy activity–loud noise, and fear when the bear was there–quiet again, and relief on the part of the other animals.

He could find particular information or words which suggested the animals' various activities and their fear, and recognised that they went back at the end to the same activities as before. He was also able to re-tell what the bear did to get the acorns, but did not realise that the shaking of the branch was intended by the bear to knock them down. He enjoyed the idea of the bear falling with a crash. Amrik recognised that the use of capital letters for 'CRASH' and 'BANG' was meant to convey loudness, but he was not able to read aloud with the kind of expression which could indicate how the dashes were used (eg in 'He was a hungry bear – a very hungry bear.').

# Evidence from Classwork
## – Example 2: Amrik – Use of a reading scheme

### AREAS FOR EXPLORATION

Which of the four areas for exploration (attitude and motivation, pursuit of meaning, decoding-recognising words and sentences, awareness of author's use of language) are particularly relevant for Amrik, and which particular questions should be considered?

Some points noted in the description above of Amrik's reading were already known to the teacher and had previously been recorded in his English Language record of strengths and needs. These were:

- his tendency to relate what he reads to experiences he has had (like that of the bears in the zoo)
- his slowness to recognise 'irregularly' spelt words which do not offer 'phonic clues' to pronunciation, and therefore to recognition of the word
- his 'word by word' reading aloud, which sometimes causes him to miss the beginnings and ends of sentences and read with poor expression of the meaning.

Amrik's reading of this section of his reader suggests need for continued attention to decoding-recognising words and sentences, and in particular to the recognition of unfamiliar words, to reading aloud confidently and to punctuation in reading.

Analysis of his understanding of the story, however, also shows that, probably, his sophistication as a reader is to some extent hidden by the problems apparent when he reads aloud. In fact he showed an appreciation of the overall structure of the story and of how the author had conveyed both the other animals' fear and the bear's noises and awesome appearance. The 'pursuit of meaning' aspect of his reading is therefore a strength, for which praise and encouragement could be given.

### POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

This stage of progress suggests that useful next steps for Amrik could be:

*1 Help with unfamiliar and awkwardly spelt words prior to reading*

This might take the form of discussion of meanings and demonstration of spelling, with 'look/cover/write' practice. Such an approach has the advantage of both focus on the meaning and structure of the word and, in the subsequent reading of the text, immediate reinforcement through the recognition and interpretation of the words in an interesting context.

*2 Work to increase confidence in reading aloud with good expression of the meaning*

One way to approach this might be to begin with silent reading and fairly detailed discussion, to ensure full understanding; then to invite Amrik to read a section aloud, specifically asking him to read whole sentences at a time, to make it sound exciting, funny (or whatever is appropriate).

Demonstration by the teacher, or other pupils (on different sentences/sections from Amrik's) could be helpful. So could activities in which another pupil or pupils, or parent(s)/brother/sister, read(s) aloud through a story with Amrik, each taking a sentence at a time. Needless to say, praise for Amrik's progress with this skill would be an important factor in helping him.

Both of these 'next steps' could be repeated in various reading activities over a period of time.

Notes

# Evidence from Classwork
## – Example 3: Kerry – Use of non-fiction texts

***Pen portrait***

Kerry's confidence as a reader is developing fast, after a period of slow progress. The shift in motivation seems to be related to a change in the reading scheme she was following to one she finds easier to cope with.

### THE TASK

In connection with an environmental studies topic, the class has been learning how to find information in reference books using the index and how to summarise the important points. The approach to summarising used involves three stages:

1 underlining key words on the text after reading it
2 noting these on a separate page
3 writing an account of the information obtained.

In the case of Kerry's group the teacher asked the pupils to underline words on the first two paragraphs only (other groups did this for the whole text) and the teacher gave the group direct support and encouragement as they 'made the notes' transferring the underlined words to the separate page.

***Surviving in the Desert***
***Houses made of hair***

To make tents, camel or goat hair is collected by combing the animals. It is then woven into long strips which are sewn together. In the Sahara, sheep's wool is used. When wet, it expands and so keeps rain out. The largest piece is used for the tent roof. The side walls and the back can be rolled up to allow cool breezes to blow through it.

The tent is low lying to prevent winds and sandstorms from blowing it over. Although it is possible to stand up inside, people tend to sit down to avoid smoke from the fire. A wealthy sheikh may have a tent with four or five central poles instead of the two or three which are used to support smaller tents. The poles can be raised or lowered depending on the strength of the wind. Smaller poles are used to support the front, the back and the sides.

A curtain inside the tent divides the space into the male and female areas. The male section is the more public area: it has a fire around which people can sit and where coffee is made. Camel saddles and cushions are used as seating. The female area is used for storing spare clothes, sacks of grain, dates, coffee beans, and leather bags containing water and cooking utensils. There may also be a paraffin lamp, a radio and perhaps a sewing-machine.

Whether tent strips are bought or made, repairs need to be carried out and the whole tent may have to be taken apart each year to allow damaged strips to be replaced. There may be only a few tents in a camp or as many as thirty. These family groups move off together every week or two, when they need to find fresh grazing areas. The tent and everything inside it can be dismantled and packed in less than two hours.

The text had two pictures, one of Bedouin women weaving tent strips and one of them sewing the strips together in the open air to make a tent.

### KERRY'S ACCOUNT OF THE INFORMATION

The words underlined in the text are those Kerry chose. She then listed them on her notes page:

| | |
|---|---|
| camel or goat hair | √ |
| woven | √ |
| sheeps | √ |
| Sahara | √ |
| rolleded up | √ |
| low-lying | √ |
| sit down | √ |
| two or three poles | √ |

The tick after each word was added later, when, on the teacher's advice, Kerry checked that she had used all her notes in her account of the information.

Kerry's account was as follows:

Bedouin tents

1 camel and goat hair is used for the tent
2 It is woven into little bit of thread
3 They sheep on rugs. *(Note: Kerry appeared to have written 'sleep' first, then to have changed it to 'sheep'.)*
4 They live in the Sahara and Travill to playse.
5 They put the rug Down
Becauz the man and woman are separated
6 The tents are low lying
Becauz the sand saurm migt blow Them uP
7 you can not stand uP in the tent.
becauz it is low.
8 It has Two or Three Poles in The tent.

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# Evidence from Classwork
## – Example 3: Kerry – Use of non-fiction texts

### AREAS FOR EXPLORATION

For Kerry, the most fruitful area for exploration in connection with this task is probably pursuit of meaning, particularly questions concerned with using context fully, main ideas or following a (brief) line of argument. There might also be something to consider in the area of recognising sentences, as opposed to just points of information.

Kerry underlined and then listed words related to the five key points of information given on the first page:

1 woven camel or goat hair
2 sheep's wool used in the Sahara
3 back and sides of tent can be rolled up
4 tents are low (so people sit)
5 number of poles supporting tent.

In addition, in her written account of the information, Kerry refers to two further points from the second page of the text (the Bedouin travel about and the men and women are separated in the tent). She was probably helped to recall these two points by the preparatory class discussion of the text. Even so, it is clear that she has been able to recognise important vocabulary and understand several key ideas in the text. Her written account also shows some appreciation of at least two supporting points of detail – the reason for having 'low-lying' tents. (There is also some indication, though not very explicit, in 'woven into little bit of thread' that she had an idea of the long strips into which the animal hair is woven.)

Kerry's written account also raises some points which the teacher would want to explore with her. For example, she has become confused about the role of sheep's wool in the life of the Bedouin, possibly because class discussion about how they sleep (which is not referred to in the text) has misled her. She has also misread the specific point about people normally remaining seated in the tent, possibly because the 'Although' construction which starts the sentence was unfamiliar. Also, in choosing to underline and use in her account the idea of 'two or three' poles for the tent, she has missed the main point of that sentence, that the rich leader of the group would have a bigger tent.

Kerry's account also raises possible points for exploration in respect of her writing, of course, if the teacher wishes to discuss them with her, or perhaps take them into account the next time they are working on writing.

### POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

A 'growth point' for Kerry is her ability to find key points as she works sequentially through the text and to recall key points from class discussion of it. Her confidence would be boosted by praise for this and she could be assured that she can become even better at noting and writing down the important information (perhaps to give to another group).

Her main need to achieve this improvement seems to be to read each information point and each sentence carefully, relating them to their immediate context. The teacher might want to take time to work with Kerry's group on this text and similar ones, helping them to look consciously at what comes just before and just after a point like 'In the Sahara, sheep's wool is used', to see what the *whole message* is about that point.

It might also be helpful for the teacher to 'box' sections of text dealing with ideas which are linked or affect one another and to ask the pupils to explain the message of each 'box'. Once they are used to this approach, the pupils could be invited to discuss and decide for themselves where the 'boxes' should be drawn; and then to decide what the 'message' of each box is.

Notes

# Evidence from Classwork
## – Example 4: Lisa – Use of non-fiction texts

***Pen portrait***

Lisa enjoys English and has worked hard on the *Witch Poems and Stories* unit. She reads a great deal of fiction but until now, when asked to undertake any research work, has copied out sections of text.

***THE TASK***

The task was to undertake a piece of research and to present findings in the form of a written report.

The focus of the research could be either

topic (a) witchcraft – what is it?

or

topic (b) witches from the past.

***LISA'S RESPONSE TO THE TASK***

*Library research*

Witches are people who are supposed to worshop a non-Christian god and to be able to cast magic spells for good or evil. They are said to fly at night on a wooden broom. There are lots of different tales about witches. In lots of different films and storys all the witches look the same, ugly face very old and always a black cloke. Lots of people believe that you became a witch by working with the devil. It is said that the witches are given there powers by the devil. Lots of books where writen about witches and all thier evil powers long ago. The people of the church thought that witch's should be caught and hanged. Between 1500 and 1750 200,000 people thought that they were witches. I do not believe in witchcraft.

***AREAS FOR EXPLORATION AND POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS***

The teacher's reaction to Lisa's report was as follows:

'Lisa has done some background reading for this report and has tried to use her own words rather than simply copying out chunks of text. She has presented a number of points of information, some of which are taken from reading eg 'witches are people who are supposed to worship a non-Christian God' and 'between 1500 and 1750, 200,000 men and women were killed because people thought that they were witches'. However I suspect that some ideas came from her own experience: 'all witches look the same, ugly face very old and always a black cloke'. Her report is not really very well focused either on topic (a) or topic (b) but includes elements of both.

There is a sense of life about the response and interest in the subject which I would wish to maintain.

I talked about her work and agreed to concentrate on pursuit of meaning. We decided to begin by separating out Lisa's ideas from library research. (Do pupils bring in their own ideas?) and to make the difference clear in the report. We also talked about different reading strategies (Do pupils use a range of strategies appropriate to the purpose of reading?). It became clear that Lisa always simply reads through text from beginning to end. Lisa is now going to work on building skimming and scanning into her range of approaches to reading. She is working on this with one of her friends, reading pieces of text quickly and telling one another about the main ideas.'

*Notes*

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# Evidence from Classwork
## –Example 5: John – Use of a class novel

***Pen portrait***

John finds some reading difficult. Recent English work in his class has been based on *A Pair of Jesus Boots* by Sylvia Sherry. The novel is more difficult than would be attempted by John in his own private choice of reading.

### *THE TASK*

Over a period of time, sections of the novel were read aloud to a group by the teacher while John and a few others followed the line in their own copies of the text. Now and again the teacher stopped to ask questions and invite discussion from the group. John participated well throughout.

The purpose of the work was to develop the ability to follow certain threads or themes through a lengthy text. Thus, although particular episodes and passages received close attention, all discussion and writing related to the main theme – the development of the central character, Rocky O'Rourke.

John's task was to write about Rocky O'Rourke and to show how Rocky changed as the story developed.

### *JOHN'S RESPONSE TO THE TASK*

A pair of Jesus boots and the author is Sylvia Sherry.

Rocky had a wee step sister and a big brother who was in jail for the first few chapters. Rocky wanted to be a criminal he lived in St. Cathrins Sqre. He is the leader of the cats. The cats were Chan, Bedeey, Nabber and Billy. They were boys that hung about shops and broke into shope. The cats did not like the chikes lot the cats like to fight with the chikes lot but chikes Joey was set up and went to jail and he was Rocky's hero and Joey got let our erly and when he got home he stole his mums money and went a way and he wanted out of Liverpool because he was scard of Jim Sipson.

Rockys dad died and his mum got marred with the other man who had a wee garl. Mr Olaver was the man that looked after the flats and Rocky was playing football and he found out that he was an ex Liverpool player.

He chaneged when Joye got out of jail he did not like him for takeing the money from his mum so he did not want to be a criminal.

### *AREAS FOR EXPLORATION AND POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS*

The teacher's reaction to John's work was as follows:

'John has enjoyed 'Jesus Boots' and sometimes when we were reading the book talked to me about what he thought would happen next. His piece of writing shows that he has picked up a lot of information from the novel. He knew the cats were Chan, Beady, Nabber and Billy and he has been able to make inferences about characters: 'Rocky wanted to be a criminal'.

He does show an awareness of the change in Rocky: 'Joey was set up and went to jail and he was Rocky's hero' and 'he (Rocky) did not like him for taking the money from his mum so he did not want to be a criminal'. There is an attempt to explain the change in Rocky by referring to his disillusion with his brother, Joey, when he witnesses Joey stealing from his mother.

There is evidence that John knows of other conflicting influences on Rocky (paragraph 2), but these are not linked explicitly to the change in Rocky. I would want to look at pursuit of meaning – at the questions on main points and following a line of argument. Perhaps it would help to give John's group some statements about Rocky and ask them to identify which of these were main ideas; or it might be useful to give the group a range of statements, some true, some not and ask John's group to choose which ones are true and to prove it from the text.'

***Notes***

# Evidence from Classwork
## – Example 6: Clare – Use of national tests

*Pen portrait*

Clare is a lively, talkative and sociable girl, interested in everything and an avid reader for pleasure. Her teacher had considered that she was clearly attaining 5–14 Level B targets in her reading in class.

### THE TASK

After a brief preliminary discussion with the teacher and her group Clare read 'The Ginger Coloured Dragon' (National Test RNOB32) and gave answers to the test questions as shown below.

**The Ginger Coloured Dragon**

Far, far away in a northern country there is a dark and gloomy place called the Valley of the Dragons. Tall grey mountains stand around it and a deep cold loch comes into it from the sea.

Once upon a time a dragon called Gustus lived in this place. Gustus was a very special sort of dragon. His skin was not green like the skin of the other dragons. Instead it was the colour of ginger.

When Gustus was born his parents said. 'Oh dear! Something has gone wrong! His skin is such a funny colour'.

It was really a beautiful colour, warm and gentle. But all the other dragons thought it was ugly, just because it was different.

The dragons liked to tell stories to one another. When it was time for a story, they came out of the caves where they lived and sat in a ring with the story-teller in the middle.

Gustus loved stories and wanted to have a chance to tell some, but the others laughed at him and would not listen when he tried to go into the centre of the circle to take his turn.

'Ha, ha, Gustus!' they cried. 'You're an ugly fellow, you know. Don't you wish you were green and beautiful like us?'

When this happened, Gustus could not go on with the story that he wanted to tell. Instead, he crept away to his cave and lay there all alone feeling sad.

Adapted from *The Ginger Coloured Dragon* by Margaret Donaldson

*Note: Clare read the passage and answered the questions on her own, 'as a test'. Afterwards, however, the teacher could, of course, go over it with her, or perhaps with her group, discussing what she meant by her answers and trying to find out how apparent errors had arisen.*

### CLARE'S RESPONSES IN THE TEST

*Sentence completion*

SECTION A: Use the story to help you complete the sentences.

1 Gustus was different from the other dragons because
*he was a special dragon*

2 When Gustus was born his parents thought
*his skin was beautiful*

3 When the other dragons saw Gustus they thought his colour was
*honble*

4 We like to watch television in our spare time. The dragons like to
*tell stones to each outher*

5 When it was his turn to tell a story a dragon sat
*in this cave feeling sad*

6 When Gustus tried to take his turn to tell a story the other dragons
*just said ha ha*

7 Gustus could not go on with his story because
*All the dragons were to noisele*

SECTION B: Underline the best ending.

1 At the end of the story Gustus feels
<u>unhappy</u>
terrified
cross

2 The other dragons treated Gustus the way they did because he was
beautiful
different
<u>alone</u>

3 The other dragons treated Gustus
well
<u>badly</u>
kindly

4 Gustus
disliked stories
<u>liked stories very much</u>
sometimes liked stories

SECTION C: Which of the people in the story might have said these things? <u>Underline</u> the best answer.

1 'What a strange colour my little one is!'
Gustus / a dragon / <u>Gustus' mother</u>

2 'Go away! You are not like the rest of us!'
Gustus / dragons / <u>Gustus' parents</u>

3 'All I wanted to do was tell a story'.
<u>Gustus</u> / another dragon / Gustus' father

4 'Green is best! Down with Ginger!'
Gustus / <u>dragons</u> / Gustus' parents

5 'It would be lovely to be like the others'.
<u>Gustus</u> / dragons / Gustus' parents

# Evidence from Classwork
## – Example 6: Clare – Use of national tests

Clare scored a total of 10 marks out of 16:

- 3/7 for Section A, the sentence completion task, where the focus is on understanding of the facts and events in the story (they also touch on the attitudes of the characters).
- 3/4 for the 'best ending' tasks in Section B. These focus on understanding of the feelings and attitudes of the characters.
- 4/5 for Section C, the underlining tasks, which also focus on feelings and attitudes of characters but involve recognising these in sentences different from those actually in the story.

### *AREAS FOR EXPLORATION AND POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS*

With a pupil's responses to a national test, the most likely major areas for exploration will be pursuit of meaning and awareness of author's use of language. Which particular questions arise for consideration?

Despite the low score in Section A, it is clear that Clare has understood the main point of the story – Gustus is ostracised because he looks different. She has inferred the feelings and attitudes of the various characters – this can be deduced from Questions C1, 4 and 5 (and from the wrong answer to C2). She has also shown in Question B1, 3 and 4 that she can relate these feelings and attitudes to her own experience by being able to select appropriate words to describe them. We can also deduce from questions A3 and 6 that Clare has a good understanding of the other dragons' attitude to Gustus and some linguistic sophistication (she supplies a synonym for 'ugly', not just picking the word out of the passage, and she (probably) recognises the tone in which the dragons said 'Ha, Ha'. This last point could be checked by the teacher in discussion.)

What about her errors? How is it that a pupil who has evidently understood the core of this text 'missed' four of seven apparently straightforward questions in Section A? And what can be learned from her answers to B2 and C2? The answers to B2 and C2 might prove interesting, if discussed with Clare. Her choice of 'He was alone' as the reason why the other dragons were unpleasant to Gustus might show that she was making a quite sophisticated inference, based on the realisation that one reason why a group treats certain individuals badly is precisely because they do not have supporting friends. Similarly, her answer to C2 might suggest an awareness that even parents can reject someone who is 'different'. If discussion showed that this was how Clare was thinking, good 'next steps' might be to praise her for these ideas, but also to suggest that there is another reason why the dragons treated Gustus badly which she can work out from the passage, and to ask her to consider whether the story, as we see it in the passage, tells us that Gustus' parents or others were more likely to reject him. (Clare might be asked to find out from the passage all we get to know about Gustus' parents: in fact this is only that they thought something had gone wrong with the colour of his skin.)

It could be, of course, that Clare's wrong answers, in particular to B2 and to A1, 2 and 5, did not derive from 'over-interpretation' of the story but, more simply, from inadequate 'technique' for dealing with this type of test. For example, her answers to A1, 2 and 7 might be the result of writing prematurely, before reading again and checking the whole of the relevant section for the information. Thus she doesn't say why Gustus is special (A1) or what the effect is on his feelings of the other dragons' noisy behaviour (A5). In A2 she has picked up an accurate word for Gustus' skin and may have assumed that his parents would naturally think it beautiful, omitting the point that they were, at least at first, surprised or concerned about it. In B2 she may simply have found in the passage the correct fact that Gustus ends up alone, missing the more obvious point that it was the fact that he was different that caused his problems. Suitable next steps might be to encourage her in all close reading tasks, whether written or oral, to look for all the relevant information and be fully explicit in explaining it.

*Notes*

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Part 3

# *Taking a Closer Look at Writing*

Notes

# 7: Taking a Closer Look at Learning to Write

Diagnostic assessment is an aspect of assessment as part of teaching. Its aim is to take a closer look at pupils' learning – to see how they are dealing with what they are doing, and to examine strengths and needs in relation to particular tasks or learning targets. It explores individual pupils' thinking and reactions to the task, so that the teacher can help them to work from where they are as learners. Diagnostic assessment is thus a means by which the teacher can find evidence relating to the four key questions for 'assessment as part of teaching' set out in *Assessment 5–14*:

*What is to be learned?*

- Teaching and learning aims should be clear and shared.

*Are the pupils motivated to learn?*

- Pupils are most likely to be successful when they are confident and enthusiastic about the task.

*Are the pupils ready to learn?*

- Effective learning should build on previous experience and take account of present abilities and specific needs.

*Are learning and teaching effective?*

- Tasks, activities and methods of learning and teaching should be designed thoughtfully, with clear purpose.

## *FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL PUPIL*

Learning of any kind is complex and does not follow the same patterns for everybody. This applies particularly to the processes of learning to write and of composing a piece of writing, so it is not possible to propose a set of specific assessment activities which would always be applied in the same way and the same order, and which would always result in the same kinds of useful information. Diagnostic assessment involves judgement by the teacher of what it is most fruitful to pursue with individual pupils. Another important aspect is its value in helping pupils themselves to become more clearly aware of what they have been trying to achieve in a piece of writing, what they could be trying to achieve, and what they might now try to do.

## *INVOLVING PUPILS*

Whenever possible, it is important to involve pupils as active partners in the process. If pupils are encouraged to think reflectively about their own writing, and perhaps other pupils' writing, they will develop a framework within which they can begin to take decisions about their own next steps in writing, independent of the teacher. It is crucial that this approach is set in a constructive and supportive context, where pupils are concerned both for their own learning and the learning of others and where each individual is treated with respect.

Using examples from pupils' own writing can serve as a useful way of illustrating points which might help other pupils to develop aspects of their writing.

## *FOCUS ON WRITING*

Diagnostic assessment in writing is concerned mainly with finding out how the pupil is interpreting and carrying out writing tasks. Some of the evidence will be found in the finished product, but more from observing and discussing with the pupil. It is not possible to isolate pupils' process of writing from the teaching they have received or from the qualities in writing which teaching encourages and which the pupils are trying to achieve. It may nevertheless be helpful to teachers involved in diagnostic assessment to consider these different aspects of writing separately, even though they are inextricably integrated during actual classroom work.

## *WHEN TO INTERVENE*

The teacher's professional judgement is important in deciding when to intervene in the pupil's work. Clearly, a discussion with the teacher is likely to be helpful at certain points, such as the ends of planning, drafting and redrafting sessions. However, it is important to recognise that writing is in essence a solitary activity: the pupil needs time alone to think and draft for himself or herself.

## *CONDITIONS FOR GOOD WRITING*

Good writing flourishes in an atmosphere of general interest in language. Good conditions for the growth of writing abilities exist if:

- pupils read widely, especially for their own enjoyment
- pupils analyse their reading in discussion with the teacher and other pupils
- there are many opportunities to talk, discuss and write at length for a variety of purposes.

Particularly valuable is the kind of interest which is maintained by successful 'conferencing' approaches to writing. Pupils discuss criteria for success and compare their own writing with these criteria, thus developing the habit of self-assessment. They also feel free to consult the teacher or fellow pupils, individuals or groups, whenever they feel it would be helpful. This willingness to discuss and seek help develops when pupils become interested in helping others with their thinking and when they know from previous consultations that talking to someone else about writing can be helpful. The teaching of knowledge about language, grammar, spelling and punctuation is integrated with reading, listening, talking and writing activities.

## *A GOOD PROCESS OF WRITING*

Given such a general classroom atmosphere, any particular writing task benefits further from a now well-established process of writing, which can be described in three stages: preparing for writing, drafting and redrafting, and preparing for publishing.

*1: Preparing for writing*

Activities to prepare for writing include:

- stimulating the motivation to write
- identifying, or encouraging pupils to identify for themselves, suitable writing aims for the class or group and for individual pupils (based on previous assessment of their writing)
- providing help in finding content, perhaps through use of various resources
- discussing experiences, ideas, etc
- providing help in organising the writing, perhaps by discussion of the best order of events or ideas
- planning by individual pupils.

*2: Drafting and redrafting*

Drafting of the writing, following the plan or, quite possibly, modifying the plan or re-making it as the writing proceeds; and re-drafting, following one's own and others' evaluation of the writing.

*3: Preparing for publishing*

Ensuring correctness, appropriate layout, paragraphing, etc.

These three phases interlink in practice. However, when thinking about diagnostic procedures it may be helpful to consider each separately.

## *QUALITIES IN WRITING*

Ideally, pupils are thoroughly familiar with the qualities of good writing for particular purposes and can judge for themselves what is appropriate. Teachers can assist this by discussing the qualities of writing regularly with the pupils and offering them frequent opportunities to evaluate their own writing, and that of others, with these qualities in mind.

The following pages set out some of the purposes for writing, some possible tasks and qualities to look for in the three types of writing defined as strands in the *English Language 5–14 Guidelines:*

- personal writing
- functional writing
- imaginative writing.

These qualities can appear in some form in writing by pupils at any stage of development. However, expectations of beginning writers or less advanced ones should be appropriate for their actual stage of progress. Often the emphasis will be on improving one or two of the qualities of the writing using 'growth points' which have been identified in pupils' previous work.

# Personal Writing

| SOME PURPOSES | SOME POSSIBLE TASKS |
|---|---|
| To record events, feelings, as a personal record. | Personal log or diary of school work and feelings about it. |
| To explore/define/give an account of one's knowledge, feelings, attitudes or opinions. | Accounts of personal experience and reactions to it/feelings about it. |
| | Statements of personal views. |
| | Poems or drama scripts giving an account of personal experience. |
| | Newspaper article. |

## QUALITIES OF PERSONAL WRITING

*For all pupils at every stage, improvement is sought in personal involvement, organisation, language and genre, and technical skills*

### Personal involvement

- Pupils stating their own ideas, observations, showing personal knowledge of the subject/situation and their own responses, feelings and attitudes.
- Pupils showing personal involvement in the topic – confidence that the communication is worthwhile.

### Organisation

- Enough content/ideas to let the reader understand fully the event/experience/topic.
- The organisation of ideas, observations, views, etc, showing connections and/or relationships among them: eg chronological order, significant memories, logic, or even free association of ideas or stream of consciousness.
- Where appropriate, paragraphs or headings are used and there is appropriate layout (for example for a letter).

### Language and genre

- Appropriate/original language use: suitable, interesting vocabulary.
- Sentences are complete; there is an appropriate variety of sentence structures, including the use of link words such as 'and', 'but', 'then', 'so', 'because' etc.
- In poems:
  - appropriate use of figurative language
  - use of literary rules or conventions (eg in writing a sonnet or haiku).
- In drama: use of dialogue (realistic, well-observed etc).

### Technical skills

- Sentences, breaks, speech marked by suitable punctuation.
- Use of normal grammatical conventions, showing an understanding of relationships such as noun, object, verb, past, present, future, etc.
- Commonly used words are spelt correctly; familiar strategies (learned patterns, word lists, dictionaries) are used to attempt new or uncommon words.

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# Functional Writing

| SOME PURPOSES | SOME POSSIBLE TASKS |
|---|---|
| To make a record of events or information. | Pupils' own notes on various activities in and outside the classroom. |
| To report or convey events or information. | A report or account of activity or reading. |
| To summarise or synthesise information. | Set of instructions, charts, diagrams or tables. |
| To evaluate information/ideas/ evidence. | Poster or wall display of information. |
| To persuade someone to a point of view or action. | Newspaper article. |
| | Letter (of request for information). |
| | Summaries of read/heard material. |
| | Advertisements. |
| | Any of the above may also include an evaluative element (for example book review, account of experiment with conclusion). |

## QUALITIES OF FUNCTIONAL WRITING

*For all pupils, at every stage, improvement is sought in recording, reporting and evaluation.*

### Recording

***Content and organisation***

- Key information and relevant detail included.
- The writing keeps to the point; no irrelevant information.
- Sections of the writing and the sequence of the information show a logic; they indicate understanding of the events, ideas, information, and how they relate to one another.

***Language***

- Vocabulary shows understanding of/familiarity with the topic.
- The record may be in note form or in sentences.

### Reporting/summarising/synthesising information/giving instructions

***Content and organisation***

***As for Recording and***

- Suitable layout and format are used (for example involving title, headings, diagram, illustration, varying size of print); recognised conventions are used (for example for letters, science reports).
- The writing concludes or rounds off suitably.

***Language***

***As for Recording and***

- A suitable style and tone are used (for example personal/impersonal, informal/ formal, simple and direct/elaborate) depending on the intended reader.
- Sentences are complete; there is an appropriate variety of sentence structures (many of which may be simple to meet reporting purposes); there is appropriate use of various link words (and, but, so, because, since, etc).

### Evaluation and persuasion

***Content and organisation***

***As for Recording and Summarising and***

- There is clear statement of the writer's own view or position.
- There is evidence to support this view or position (facts, reasoning, illustration, quotation).
- Account is taken of other views/positions.

***Language***

***As for Recording and Summarising above, and***

- Appropriate persuasive language is used.

# *Imaginative Writing*

| *SOME PURPOSES* | *SOME POSSIBLE TASKS* |
|---|---|
| To entertain, give pleasure. | Stories. |
| To explore, interpret, reflect experience. | Drama (scripts, preferably arising from improvisation and practical activity). |
| | Poems. |

## *QUALITIES OF IMAGINATIVE WRITING*

*For all pupils, at every stage, improvement is sought in originality of content, sequence of action, character, setting, and language and genre (the features of narrative). Some of the qualities below also apply to poems. Additional points appropriate to poetry are to be found under Personal Writing.*

**Originality of content**

- Originality of ideas, perceptions, inventions; use of experience or of reading; sense of writer's personality in the writing.

**Sequence of actions**

- At the simplest, an unsophisticated chronological order (and then .. and then ...).
- Ordering of events or observations by logic, suspense, or some other pattern. Characters or events cause effects – on the characters themselves, on other characters, on other events, etc.
- Selective and meaningful use of events, characters, detail, setting – not just 'everything that happened'.

**Character(s)**

- Description of the character(s).
- Presentation of the viewpoints, motivation and behaviour of characters with various attitudes.
- Appropriate dramatisation, instead of simple description (ie characters who act and thus reveal themselves).
- Indication of relationships between characters and of effects of events on characters; perhaps changes in characters' attitudes and behaviour; where appropriate, conflict between characters.

**Setting**

- Contextualisation of events and characters, the creation of a 'world' for them to exist in. Includes physical setting and time of the story, the history of any earlier relevant events.

**Language and genre**

- Use of story conventions and techniques (for example of crime story, of fantasy story, of romantic story).
- Use of dialogue (original, realistic or well-observed).
- Suitable, interesting vocabulary. Appropriate/original language use.
- Use of techniques (eg simile, metaphor, alliteration) to convey feelings or ideas.
- Particular emphasis on use of dialogue and presentation of characters' viewpoints, attitudes, conflicts.
- Use of normal grammatical conventions, showing an understanding of relationships such as noun, object, verb, past, present, future, etc.
- Commonly used words spelt correctly. Familiar strategies (learned patterns, word lists, dictionaries) used to attempt new or uncommon words.

# 8: Diagnostic Procedures in Writing

This chapter is concerned with the strategies for taking a closer look at pupils' writing in order explore pupils' progress and help pupils' learning.

## AN OUTLINE OF DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES APPLIED TO WRITING

This is an outline of an 'ideal' process which may be undertaken with individual pupils, or groups of pupils. It is not intended that the teacher and pupils work through all the stages every time a piece of writing is being produced, but the aim should be to ensure that pupils assimilate these stages into their normal approach to writing.

### TEACHER ACTIVITY

#### *Planning*

- Ensure an understanding of the **qualities** of the type of writing being looked at
- **Define a meaningful task.** What is going to be done? How does it link with previous work?

↓

#### *Teaching*

- **Introduce** the topic and the task, or encourage pupils to find their own topic and purpose. Prepare and motivate pupils:
  - do they have something to write *about*?
  - do they understand the nature of the task?
- **Observe** pupils
- **Read** and **discuss** pupils' writing – focus comment on the qualities of writing considered at the start of exercise: encourage pupils to assess their own writing in relation to these
- **Assess** and **diagnose.** Discuss with pupils and encourage revision.

↓

#### *Moving on*

- **Identify qualities** of writing in pupils' work, 'growth points' and aspects requiring further work
- **Record** (if appropriate)
- Help pupils to overcome weaknesses and so make progress
- **Prepare follow up.**

### PUPIL ACTIVITY

#### *Preparing for writing*

- Initial stimulus to writing. **Explore** the topic and the task (possible methods for this include reading, discussion with the teacher, conferencing, brainstorming etc)
- **Plan** – make notes, gather ideas etc.

↓

#### *Drafting and redrafting*

- **Write** first draft
- **Revise** and **redraft** composition (ie reorder, add/delete, change meaning–the 'composition skills') – perhaps in consultation with the teacher, peer group, or another pupil.

↓

#### *Preparing to publish*

- **Edit** grammar, spelling etc – the formal or 'transcription' skills
- Drafting, redrafting and editing need not be regarded as occurring strictly separately or in the sequence given
- **Produce** final fair copy
- **Proof-read** and **publish.**

### OBTAINING EVIDENCE

Three straightforward teaching activities are the principal means by which assessment evidence is obtained:

- *Observing* – watching pupils preparing, planning, drafting, re-planning and redrafting.
- *Reading* – considering carefully what the pupils have written.
- *Questioning* – interacting with the pupils, discussing with them, and listening to them to find out what they are trying to achieve at different points in the writing process.

There are no 'diagnostic tests' of writing which will provide better evidence. The familiarity of these procedures should not mask the fact that what one is obtaining evidence about can range widely: it might, for instance include the extent to which various qualities are present in the writing; aspects of the pupil's 'psychology', such as motivation, confidence and previous experience; and the pupil's understanding of and ability to deal with the task as the teacher presented it.

### FOCUSING ON GROWTH POINTS

The particular focus of observation, questioning and discussion will depend on the purpose of the writing, the task and what the teacher knows about the pupil.

What is important is that there should be a limited focus – a concentration on one aspect, or a small number of aspects, which the pupil can manage to think about, develop or improve. It is helpful for the teacher to identify one or two 'growth points' which are most significant for the pupil – something the pupil is already showing understanding or awareness of, or something readily related to his or her thinking about the task.

One effective way of focusing on something the pupil can deal with is to observe, read and discuss with three questions in mind:

- what is being done successfully? (give praise for this)
- what is being attempted, perhaps without full success? (give praise for this, too; and recognise it as a growth point, something which the pupil can be helped to develop or improve)
- what else is needed? (this may be something necessary to achieve the purpose of the task, but which the pupil shows no awareness of; or, perhaps, some particular point of spelling, grammar or punctuation which could be taught; or it may be best to work at present only on the growth points identified).

### ACTING ON EVIDENCE

Once the 'close look' has suggested growth points, the teacher can help the pupil to move on by identifying the most helpful next steps, either in continuing work on the current task or in the next task.

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# 9: Areas for Exploration

This chapter takes each phase of the writing process and offers possible areas for exploration in the form of questions to be considered. These questions are not intended to be a rigid sequential checklist: they are intended to be used flexibly to help the teacher to identify action and next steps for individual pupils.

The three phases of the writing process have been subdivided as follows:

*1:* ***Preparing for writing (pages 52 to 53)***
- purposes and qualities
- task
- particular aims
- planning

*2:* ***Drafting and redrafting (pages 54 to 55)***
- conditions for good writing
- using the plan
- thinking about qualities and focus
- redrafting

*3:* ***Preparing to publish (pages 56 to 58)***
- sentences and paragraphs
- spelling
- presentation
- handwriting

This is an attempt to bring together features of existing good practice – much of what it contains should reassure teachers about what they already do rather than reveal anything new or radical.

One aim has been to present a framework within which writing can be taught. It is *not* intended that teachers do everything that is presented within this framework with every pupil and for every piece of writing. The process outlined is an ideal and many factors will affect the way the teachers translate it into practice. However we hope that while teachers will concentrate on particular aspects of the process at any one time, it will prove useful to have in mind the larger structure into which individual aspects fit.

# *Preparing for Writing*

Which of the following questions do you think it is important to consider?

- *Does the pupil have a clear idea of the purpose of the writing and the qualities expected?*
- *Does the task offer the pupil real opportunities to demonstrate her/his ability to write?*
- *Is the pupil aware of particular aims for her/him in this piece of writing?*
- *Does the pupil plan effectively before undertaking the writing task?*

| *POSSIBLE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION* | *POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS* |
|---|---|
| **Purposes and qualities** | |
| ***Does the pupil have a clear idea of the purpose of the writing?*** | • Ask why a particular kind of writing might be undertaken.<br>• Offer a range of possible purposes for writing and ask pupils to think of and discuss various specific writing tasks they could do to achieve these purposes.<br>• Give a list of types of writing task to be undertaken in class over the next month or so; ask pupils to think about and discuss the purposes of these particular tasks. |
| ***Does the pupil have a clear idea of the qualities of that type of writing?***<br><br>Opportunities such as these, which encourage sharing ideas on qualities, will help pupils to develop their own criteria against which they can begin to assess their own writing. | • Encourage pupils to keep a record of their own writing, noting beside each piece its purpose.<br>• Offer models of 'good' writing and provide opportunities to discuss the qualities in it.<br>• Give pupils a choice of two pieces of writing and ask them to say which is better and why.<br>• Offer three pieces of writing and ask pupils to link two of them which have similar qualities, giving reasons for their choice.<br>• Ask pupils to think about the particular kind of writing to be done and to discuss ideas about what would make it effective (eg what makes a good ghost story?) |
| **Task** | |
| ***Does the task offer the pupil real opportunities to demonstrate/develop her/his ability to write?*** | • Ensure that the pupil is aware of how the task fits into the wider classroom context.<br>• Talk with pupils, making the link between the task and previous work explicit or asking them to think about the task and identify the link.<br>• Consider the task against the purposes and qualities of writing it demands. Do pupils have the necessary skills/understanding/ experience?<br>• Offer a stimulus which relates to pupils' interests (reading extract, photo, TV programme etc) to encourage new ideas.<br>• Invite the pupil to consider the purpose of the activity and to create her/his own task.<br>• Introduce something new as a stimulus to interest pupils (eg outside trip, visitor, picture, video, discussion, advice on structure).<br>• Offer a range of stimuli and encourage the pupil to select the one which they would most enjoy.<br>• Invite the pupils to identify what they are trying to do in a particular piece of writing; and then to decide how well they have achieved these aims when the writing is completed. |

# Preparing for Writing

| POSSIBLE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION | POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS |
|---|---|
| **Particular aims** | |
| *Do the pupils have a clear idea of their particular aims for this piece of writing?* | • Ask the pupils to describe to you what they intend to achieve in this piece of writing.<br>• Have small groups of pupils with shared aims, to allow them to support one another.<br>• Ensure that writing aims are suitably limited in number.<br>• Ask them to note the two or three things they intend to concentrate on.<br>• Encourage pupils to identify for themselves the qualities they are trying to achieve.<br>• Clearly identify for pupils the key things you hope they will achieve.<br>• Ask the pupils (in groups, pairs) to discuss whether a particular piece of writing achieves its aims; and how it could be improved or achieve them better or more fully. |
| **Planning** | |
| *Have the pupils had adequate opportunities to think about and/or discuss the task? Have they had the opportunity to note down important ideas and organise them into a plan?* | • Try techniques to help develop ideas, eg brainstorming, conferencing, quiet reflection, providing a related task (eg selecting words around a theme from a word bank).<br>• Talk with pupils about what they intend to write or provide opportunities for them to talk with one another. |
| *Do the pupils' plans offer interesting insights? Are they likely to provide a sound basis for writing?* | • Offer pupils a plan for a story and ask them to decide whether or not it is a helpful plan and what they would change to improve it. Remind them of the qualities looked for in a good story.<br>• Discuss one part of the plan and work with the pupil(s) to develop a clearer focus on what matters, eg a key episode or character. |

*Notes*

# *Drafting and Redrafting*

Which of the following areas does your evidence suggest is the most important to address?

- *Is the classroom atmosphere conducive to writing?*
- *Is the pupil actually using the plan to help structure the writing task?*
- *Is the pupil succeeding in producing the qualities expected in this type of writing?*
- *Does the pupil understand the value of redrafting the text?*

| *POSSIBLE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION* | *POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS* |
|---|---|
| **Conditions for good writing** | |
| ***Is there a quiet atmosphere for pupils to think as they write?*** | • Create a 'quiet corner' for writers either within the classroom or the school, where conditions for working there are agreed with pupils. |
| ***Are pupils aware of how to seek support either from teachers or from other pupils?*** | • 'Publicise' your availability and that of other pupils for 'conferencing'. Have 'help cards' available, giving advice on various aspects of writing. |
| ***Are pupils aware of who will read their writing and what might happen to it (for example folder, wall display, external audience)?*** | Remind pupils that the 'publication' of their work is an important aim, and offer various outlets and audiences. |
| **Using the plan** | |
| ***Are pupils actually using the plan, however flexibly, to help structure their writing?*** | • Work with the pupils to demonstrate how part of the plan might translate into part of the writing.<br>• Where appropriate, encourage pupils to look back over the plan to modify its structure or content. |
| **Thinking about qualities and focus** | |
| ***Are pupils actively engaged in the task and succeeding in producing the qualities expected in this type of writing?*** | • Discuss further ideas or additional stimuli on how existing ideas might be developed.<br>• Ask the pupils to describe the central purpose of the writing, eg to entertain or inform the reader.<br>• Remind (or ask) the pupils to indicate the particular qualities to focus on in this piece of writing.<br>• Encourage the pupils to discuss the words they have chosen. Do they create the intended effect?<br>• Discuss with pupils how sentence structure can be used to create particular effects, eg using short sentences to build tension or to inform readers clearly. |

# Drafting and Redrafting

| POSSIBLE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION | POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS |
|---|---|
| **Redrafting** | |
| *Are there opportunities for pupils to redraft?* | • Either during the task or after the task, provide opportunities for pupils to consider their writing against the qualities and their own personal aims; and encourage them to identify and act on next steps. |
| *Do pupils know what redrafting involves?* | • Highlight for pupils that redrafting is concerned with improving the quality of the writing and not simply self correction. Ensure that pupils have practical and realistic 'next steps'. |
| *Are pupils able to think about their own writing and to identify areas for redrafting?* | • Invite the pupils to identify one area for development, for example making the end of the story more exciting, describing a character in greater detail, making a point more clearly.<br>• Concentrate on strategies to improve that quality, for example discussing ideas with other pupils.<br>• Ask pupils to draw the characters in their writing and identify further necessary information. |
| *Do pupils see the need to read over a completed draft?* | • Ask pupils in pairs or small groups to reflect on one another's writing and to work supportively together to identify strengths and areas for development.<br>• Identify particular sections and ask pupils to read them aloud; or read sections to the pupils and ask if this is what they meant. |
| *Do pupils read over sections of text which do not make sense?* | • Encourage meaning by providing a real audience for the work, for example another pupil, another class, a class magazine, parent, other teacher. |

*Notes*

# *Preparing to Publish*

Which of the following areas does your evidence suggest is the most important to address?

- *Is the pupil able to write using sentences and paragraphs effectively?*
- *Is the pupil able to write with correct spelling?*
- *Does the pupil present written work effectively?*

The questions below relate to the formal skills of writing. These are listed as three separate strands in the *English Language 5–14 Guidelines*: punctuation and structure, spelling, handwriting and presentation. Pupils need to use many of these skills in 'preparing to publish'.

| *POSSIBLE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION* | *POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS* |
|---|---|
| **Sentences** | |
| In speech most children naturally use sentences, phrases and individual words to convey meaning with great sophistication. The task is therefore to adapt the knowledge they already have of the spoken word to the written word. | |
| ***Do the pupils miss out full stops, often or occasionally?*** | • Read the text back to the pupils as marked and discuss with them if this is the way they would like the text to be.<br>• Ask the pupils to read their text aloud and note natural stops. Encourage a physical action (banging hand on desk?) to mark stops. |
| ***Do they use commas instead of full stops?*** | • Using a correction code, ask pupils to find a missing full stop in one line of their writing – then errors in several lines; then on a page.<br>• Praise recognition that a stop is needed. By direct teaching and/or use of 'help cards', demonstrate (several examples) when a full stop is needed; and how commas are used, for example for parenthesis, list, to separate the main idea in the sentence from other ideas supporting or telling us more about the main idea. These other ideas are often introduced by link words like 'when', 'if', 'because', 'although', 'instead of' etc. Use such words in examples and point them out. Ask the pupils to check their own text for 'full stop' stops and 'commas for ideas linked to main idea'.<br>• Demonstrate (possibly with 'help cards') various types of simple sentence and of sentences with subordinate clauses introduced by various link words as above. Explain that a sentence usually has one main idea, possibly with others supporting or telling us more about the main idea. Invite the pupils to distinguish between genuine sentences and cases where two sentences are run together without punctuation or separated by a comma.<br>• Where appropriate, demonstrate use of semicolons and colons to mark sections of sentences in which two main ideas are set next to each other (colon shows that next section expands or explains preceding idea; semicolon shows that another main idea follows which is closely connected to the preceding one). |
| ***Do the pupils know how to use sentence structures to create particular effects?*** | • Discuss with the pupils the structure of sentences and the need for 'joining words' or structures to link ideas; offer various joining words. Invite the pupils to create sentences using them.<br>• Offer extracts of text and ask pupils to discuss how the writer has used, for example, sentence length, structure, and punctuation to create atmosphere. |

# Preparing to Publish

| POSSIBLE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION | POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS |
|---|---|
| **Paragraphs** | |
| *Does the pupil, having structured her/his writing suitably, fail to mark the structure with paragraphs?* | • Ask pupils in pairs or groups to mark and discuss reasons for paragraph breaks in various pieces of unparagraphed text, including some of their own writing. It may be helpful to say in advance, for example, how many sections each passage might fall into, or what the main ideas are. |
| **Spelling** | |
| *Are the pupils confident about their ability to learn to spell?* | • Praise pupils for words written correctly. Perhaps count the number to emphasise success. |
| *Do they recognise mistakes?* | • Note in the margin one or two mistakes on a single line and ask the pupil to find them. This can be extended to finding a number of words from 2 to 3 lines, then from a paragraph, then a page. |
| *Are there patterns of errors?* | • Highlight for the pupil the recurring pattern and if appropriate teach a rule or devise a memory aid.<br>• Ask the pupil to learn problem words or patterns (using one of the strategies mentioned below) and check learning and retention. |
| *Do pupils have appropriate strategies for learning new words?* | • Identify pupils' remembering styles. For those with a stronger visual memory, a look-remember approach may be helpful; for those with a stronger auditory memory, saying letters over may be useful. If neither is dominant it might be helpful to reinforce either approach by asking some pupils to trace words with their fingers. To find out about pupils' memory style ask them to think about someone: do they first see a face or hear a voice? |
| *Do pupils have a strategy to help them remember words on a longer term basis?* | • Encourage pupils to learn a small number of words from their own writing, perhaps using an approach such as 'look – cover – write – check', amending the word in their own writing and then adding the word to their own 'word bank'. |
| **Presentation** | |
| *Are pupils aware of the purpose and impact of layout on readers?* | • Emphasise the potential or real readership for a piece of writing and the need for 'publishing skills' to make the text attractive.<br>• Look at examples of text from newspapers or books and ask pupils to choose which they prefer and why, or why the writer might have chosen to present the text and/or drawings in this way. |
| *Do pupils have a framework to analyse their work? Do they take into account such features as use of visuals; layout of text; use of headings and sub-headings; use of white space?* | • Provide opportunities to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the ways in which various pieces of text are presented.<br>• Encourage the use of a word-processor to allow for experiments with the presentation of the text. |

# Preparing to Publish

| POSSIBLE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION | POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS |
|---|---|
| **Handwriting**<br>*Is there need to develop pupils' handwriting skills?* | • Encourage pupils to describe what 'good' handwriting looks like, perhaps prompting them using questions (for example would all the letters go in the same direction or different directions?)<br>• Once pupils have identified a set of criteria for 'good' handwriting by looking at various examples, ask them to think about their own writing and identify one or two 'next steps' which they can try to improve its appearance.<br>• Offer a framework for analysing the pupils' writing, for example:<br>– do letters slope in the same direction?<br>– is there a mixture of capitals and small letters where all should be small?<br>– are small letters all the same size?<br>– are capitals all the same size?<br>– are all letters completed?<br>– are letters written on or between the lines?<br>– is there a 'flow', are letters linked?<br>• Provide lined paper if use of unlined is causing a problem.<br>• Ask pupils to trace over writing which they agree is good.<br>• Guide the pupil's hand to help establish an appropriate rhythm of writing – tracing over writing or practising it to encourage a flowing movement (if necessary, first encouraging flowing movement without actual letter formation). |

Notes

*Taking a Closer Look at*

# READING AND WRITING

Helping teachers to teach and pupils to learn is the key objective of the *Taking a Closer Look* diagnostic procedures series. The sets of materials, for English language, Mathematics and Science, draw on existing research and practice and apply it in the context of curriculum and assessment for Education 5–14. The authors offer guidance on diagnostic and developmental techniques, illustrated by examples from the classroom, which will help teachers to assess pupils' understanding and progress and identify appropriate next steps to help pupils make progress.

The publications aim to assist schools to develop their curriculum and assessment policies and to help individual teachers assess pupils' learning in a way which fits in with day to day teaching.

The contents of the *English Language* pack have now been brought together as one book. It contains:

- **Key Ideas in Diagnostic Assessment** – an introduction
- **Part 2: Taking a Closer Look at Reading** – teacher's guide
- **Part 3: Taking a Closer Look at Writing** – teacher's guide

*Key Ideas in Diagnostic Assessment* explains the principles of diagnostic assessment, offers advice on when to take a closer look, identifies strategies for gathering evidence and looks at factors linked to successful learning.

*Taking a Closer Look at Reading* looks at aspects of pupils' reading development. Topics explored include pupils' attitudes and motivation to read, their ability to decode and pursue meaning, and their awareness of an author's use of language. The examples illustrate the range of ways teachers can incorporate a structured diagnostic approach into their classroom teaching.

*Taking a Closer Look at Writing* examines the processes of writing, offering guidance on classroom activities relating to preparing for writing, drafting and redrafting, and preparing to publish. Detailed examination of each stage provides teachers with possible areas to explore and suggestions for next steps to help pupils to make progress.

SCRE
The Scottish Council for Research in Education

Scottish Council for
Research in Education
15 St John Street
Edinburgh EH8 8JR
Website: www.scre.ac.uk

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